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JULIE DE BOURG

OR

THE CONSPIRATOR

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE
1877.

SHILLING NOVELS.

REMINISCENCES OF A PHYSICIAN.
CINQ MARS. By A. De Vigny.
ADELAIDE LINDSAY.
THE ALBATROSS. By W. H. Kingston.
THE YOUNG PRIMA DONNA. By Mrs. Grey.
THE COMPULSORY MARRIAGE. By Mrs. Maillard.
THE DIVORCED. By Lady Charlotte Bury.
VOILET THE DANSEUSE.
LILIAS DAVENANT.
THE LITTLE WIFE. By Mrs. Grey.
THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE. By Captain Curling.
JULIE DE BOURG.

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OR,

THE CONSPIRATOR.

CHAPTER I.

THERE is a beautiful island in the Ohio, which is one of the few places in our land around which the interest of romantic association is thrown. The traveller often leaves the crowded steamer as it passes this spot, to wander among the ruins of what was once the abode of peace and happiness; and as he lingers around the scenes once hallowed by the presence of intellect and beauty, he can scarcely realize the fact that the mouldering ruins before him have ever echoed to the song of mirth or the voice of revelry.

It was near the close of a mild evening in June, the most beautiful month of a northern climate; the trees wore their richest verdure, and the birds carolled their sweetest songs around the island home of the emigrant. In what was then the far west, a son of oppressed Ireland had found a home, and he had literally caused the "wilderness to blossom as the rose." A stately mansion reared its pillared front beneath the umbrage of the forest, with porticoes extending on either side in the form of an ellipse, which served to connect the offices with the main building. The architectural elegance of the house, and the exquisite taste with which the grounds around were laid out, were evidences that attention to comfort and usefulness was blended with refined taste in the occupants of this paradise. In front, a lawn sloped gradually to the river, and the smooth green sward was shaded by magnificent forest trees, among which a vista had been opened, affording a fine view of the river, and at the same time allowing the eye of the voyager to rest upon this vision of comfort and elegance, nested in the wilderness. Well graded walks, with a carriage road, led from the house to the river, passing through an ornamental gateway supported by massive stone pillars. A hedge of hawthorn separated the avenue from the flower-garden, which was not only filled with the fair daughters of spring, but inclosed within its wide borders the rarest fruit-trees which would flourish in that latitude. The woodland had been searched for the most beautiful native plants, and these were judiciously blended with exotics, amid whose luxuriant foliage, serpentine walks, grottoes, and alcoves were formed.

All around was beautiful; but to the eye of the proprietor, the

group that occupied the portico was most lovely, for *there* were the treasures of his heart. A lady, still in the bloom of youth and beauty, sat on a low rocking-chair, lulling a child to sleep; while a boy, with the shadowless brow and buoyant laugh of childhood, was kneeling on the floor beside her, arranging the brilliant plumes of the pea-fowl in his cap. In gazing on this queenlike woman, one might be tempted to ask, how can so much beauty bear to be concealed in this lonely forest home? A tall and perfectly proportioned figure seemed instinct with the spirit of grace and elegance. The features were nobly beautiful, formed to express the emotions of a high nature, a candid mind, and cultivated intellect. The complexion was transparently fair; and her high, smooth brow was shaded by curls of glossy dark brown hair, amid whose sheen was twisted a white scarf in the form of a fanciful turban. A snowy robe of airy material floated around her majestic person, and she looked indeed the "queen of the fairy isle."

A gentleman stood upon the steps of the portico, apparently looking for the return of some one. There was a shade of thought resting upon his fine features, and so deep was his abstraction, that his wife had spoken to him thrice ere he was aroused from his reverie. In person he was tall, being quite six feet in height, with a slight bend in the shoulders, probably occasioned by his devotion to the pursuits of the scholar. A wide, well-formed forehead, prominent nose, and expressive mouth, with restless, ever-flickering eyes, whose imperfect vision required the constant aid of glasses, formed altogether a face of sufficient manly beauty, to attract and win the lovely woman who had chosen to follow him to his present retirement.

"Our guests are long returning," he at length said, after casting a lingering glance upon the pathway which led into the forest. "I hope they have not left the island, as our neighbours the Indians do not appear to be very peaceably inclined of late. I have recently seen several skulking about, and I am not entirely free from uneasiness."

The cheek of the lady paled as he uttered these words, and she involuntarily pressed her child closer to her bosom.

"Surely—surely, Eustace, after all your kindness, they will not, they cannot molest us! Only a few days since the chief was here, and, contrary to his usual stateliness, he caressed our boy, and told him, that when his weak limbs have gained strength, he will teach him to be a hunter."

"Ay—let the savage alone to gain his own ends. His heart is as deceitful as the father of lies, and his tongue smooth as oil. Still I believe he will not harm us, because nothing is to be gained by it; but Col. Alwin may not be so safe. I know there is no cause of alarm to us, dearest Margaret: if I did not, think you I would permit the beings I love best to dwell in danger? I fear that Alwin may have ventured from the island, and those two lovely girls

must not be allowed to risk their safety. My influence cannot protect them."

"If yours cannot, that of their father can. I am certain that Col. Alwin has some design in paying this long-promised visit. We know not what an ambitious and disappointed man may be tempted to do. The chief and himself had a long conversation when Oùtalassa was last here, and there seemed to be a very good understanding between them. I may be mistaken, but I certainly think they have met before: and from the unusual animation of the Indian, I thought the subject was one of uncommon interest, to arouse him from his usual apathy. Of course I could not understand them, as they spoke the Indian dialect, with which Col. Alwin appeared quite familiar."

A shade of surprise and mistrust passed over the open brow of Fitzgerald, as his wife spoke; but with an effort he banished the suspicion that crossed his mind, and said—

"No, no, *that* cannot be. I know him to be a baffled and bitterly disappointed man; but he could not seek my friendship to destroy me, and render desolate the home that is now so happy. If I thought this I would—but no, it cannot be."

His wife gazed on his bent brow and compressed lips with apprehension. She was about to inquire his meaning, when voices were heard approaching from the direction of the shrubbery, and in a few moments two ladies and a gentleman appeared in sight.

The ladies were both young and beautiful, and a finer picture could not have been offered to the eye of an artist than they made as they approached the mansion, with their arms twined around each other. The elder one was strikingly lovely; the contour of her person was perfect. Her complexion was of that clear olive through which the eloquent blood mantles as thought or emotion prompts. The colour of her eyes it was impossible to tell, they were neither grey nor blue; but from beneath their long dark lashes they shot forth gleams of animation and intellect, to which few could be insensible. Her dark hair was parted over a brow of singular loveliness, and folded around her exquisitely formed head, without any ornament. There was the beauty of an angel animated by the soul of a noble and high-minded woman.

There was a quiet dignity in her carriage which distinguished her from the graceful girl by her side, who might readily have been taken for her younger sister. *There* was all the joyousness of youth and hope for life to breathe on and destroy. The deep dark eye, in which a world of hopes were mirrored, the full red lips on which a sunny smile lingered, and the dark tresses floating wildly on the wind, seemed a type of the spirit within, over which no blight had yet fallen. Flowers were clinging to the rings of her hair, and her merry laugh was borne on the breeze as she hurried her companion along at a quicker pace than the quiet Julie was accustomed to.

A gentleman followed a few paces behind them, with his arms

folded on his breast, his thoughts far otherwise employed than in attending to the picture of youth and loveliness before him. His figure was not above the middle height, but he possessed the graceful mien and commanding air of one accustomed to deference in the most polished circles. His face was one which even an ordinary observer would have pronounced that of no common man. He had the high, broad brow which we associate with the possession of vigorous intellect; his eyes were small, dark, and glittering, ever moving with the restless wandering, indicative of the character of their owner; the form of the chin, and the thin, compressed lips, expressed decision not unmingled with sternness; but when he smiled the whole expression changed, and nothing could be more brilliant or striking than the transient illumination. His brow was smooth and unfurrowed as in youth; no lines "such as the soul's war doth leave behind" might be traced there; and the glance of his clear eye contradicted the supposition that his spirit had yielded to, or been softened by past afflictions. Sorrows he had known—the agony of wasted affection and disappointed ambition—they had left their traces in his heart, but his unbending nature had not been subdued by them.

"Dear Isabel," said Julie to her laughing companion, "do not hurry me thus. Your mad spirits carry you away. I am weary, dearest, with our long walk."

"You are, indeed," said the gay girl, her manner instantly changing from mirth to deep tenderness, as she looked on the pale cheek of her companion. "I was thoughtless, unkind;" and checking her pace, they slowly approached the house.

"You lingered long," remarked Fitzgerald, as they entered. "I assure you, ladies fair, that we were quite uneasy at your protracted absence."

"Oh, we have had such a jaunt!" exclaimed Isabel. "I wonder what our city friends would have said had they seen Julie and myself trudging over the island, with our slippers nearly worn off in one promenade."

As she spoke, she held out a foot with its fairy slipper half torn off, an accident which had happened while scrambling through the underwood in search of a flower she had seen from the pathway.

"If they could behold you now, I am sure they would envy the carnation that glows on your cheek, Miss Alwin, and your fair city friends, I suspect, would willingly purchase such a bloom at a greater expense than even a torn shoe," replied Fitzgerald, with the characteristic gallantry of his countrymen.

Isabel laughed and bowed as she continued.

"Our walk was not entirely without adventure. We met that splendid savage, Oùtalassa, and my father conversed with him, while I endeavoured to manage his canoe. I could not persuade Julie to venture in, so for the novelty of the thing I resolved to push myself about over the quiet waters. I succeeded in getting the canoe from

the shore, but, alas, for my skill in boat craft, I could not return, and was floating down with the current, when Julie called the attention of my father to the situation in which I had so heedlessly placed myself. The chief, with more gallantry than I had expected from a savage, waded into the river, which you know is quite shallow just now, and drew the canoe to the shore. He looked at me as I leaped from it, and said: 'The Glancing Eyes has not the skill of the squaw in managing the canoe.' My father chided me, but I was compensated for even his frown, by having so poetic an appellation given to me by this son of the forest."

As Isabel thus rattled on, she did not observe the dark shade which gathered on the face of their host. His suspicions had at last been aroused, and with difficulty he commanded himself sufficiently to receive his mysterious guest with the cordiality due from the master of the mansion. Col. Alwin only bowed in reply to his words, and passed into the house.

Baffled in his half formed purpose of demanding an interview with him, and at once satisfying his doubts, Fitzgerald turned moodily away, and left their young guests with his wife.

CHAPTER II.

Eustace Fitzgerald was the descendant of a noble Irish family. He received the education of an accomplished gentleman, and continued to cultivate his taste for the sciences, music, and general literature. After the usual European tour made by young men of his station and expectations, he returned to his unhappy country, just in time to involve himself in the political difficulties which deluged the soil of Erin with the blood of some of her noblest sons. In consequence of this imprudence, he was compelled to part with his paternal estate, and retire from his native land. He resided for a time in England, where he met with the brilliant Margaret Geraldin, wooed and won her.

His republican prepossessions induced him to look with a longing eye to the country which had just struggled into independence, and was already making giant strides towards her present elevation among the nations of the earth. To reside in a free country where he could venture to utter the promptings of his spirit without fear, became his most ardent desire; and with the full concurrence of his wife, preparations were made to remove to the United States, vith the intention of there making his future home. He brought vith him letters of introduction to several gentlemen of high politi-el standing, and the most conspicuous among them was Col. Alwin.

At the time of Fitzgerald's arrival, the country was in a state of ferment rarely observable among a people who are not remarkable fo. their excitability. Col. Alwin had himself been a candidate for anoffice of the highest trust in the gift of the people. The popularty of his opponent was equal to his own; and after a closely

contested election, Alwin, believing his chance of ultimate success precarious, was induced to withdraw. His political adherents were at a loss to account for his course, and his haughty spirit was galled to find himself rapidly declining in popularity with his own party.

It was now obvious to him that he could no longer rely on that party for the success of his aspiring hopes, and he conceived a plan worthy of his genius and daring to regain his lost influence. To such a man, death were far preferable to insignificance, and he exulted in the hope of being enabled at some future day to brave those who had thwarted his high raised hopes of power. He became a candidate for the office of governor of one of the most populous and wealthy states in the Union, hoping that, when the influence of his personal friends, united with what was called the federal party, had elected him, he could use the power thus vested in his hands, for the furtherance of his more ambitious views.

It was at this crisis that Fitzgerald arrived in the United States, and became, for some weeks, a guest in the family of Col. Alwin. His household at that time consisted of himself, his daughter, and a young man of the name of Russel, who had been educated by him, and was now pursuing the study of law with him. A few days after the arrival of Mr. Fitzgerald and his lady, the family circle was completed by the return of Miss de Bourg, the adopted daughter of Col. Alwin, from a visit to some friends in the country.

Julie de Bourg was the orphan child of a French *emigre* of high rank, who had fled from her country during the revolution. The Count de Bourg, when about to embark with his wife and child, to fly to a foreign land, was arrested and thrown into prison. The unhappy wife was torn from her husband and her country in the same hour; in vain did she demand to be left behind that she might at least share the fate of her beloved husband; her friends forced her on board the vessel, and after a tedious voyage she landed on a foreign shore, nearly destitute of money, worn down with illness and affliction, with an infant child whose helpless cries called on her for protection and support.

The vessel in which Madame de Bourg came out, was fortunately consigned to a gentleman who was acquainted with Col. Alwin. He informed him of her desolate situation; an appeal of such a nature was never made to him in vain. Even in the midst of his absorbing political cares, the voice of distress ever found an echo in his heart.

He saw Madame de Bourg; and her anguish, when she spoke of the fate of her lovely child, interested him deeply. She was rapidly sinking into the tomb, and in her last moments he cheered the dying stranger's heart, by pledging himself to perform the duties of a parent to her daughter. That pledge he had amply fulfilled, and Julie loved him she called father as fondly as though he had really stood in that relation towards her.

After a tedious negotiation, Fitzgerald succeeded in purchasing

the beautiful island on which his residence was situated, and he visited the West to superintend the extensive improvements he contemplated making. He left his wife to enjoy the pleasures of a city life with the two daughters of Col. Alwin, who were to make their debut at a fashionable watering-place, under the care of their elegant and fascinating guest.

They were suddenly summoned home with the appalling intelligence that Col. Alwin had challenged a political opponent of distinguished reputation; that Gen. —— was mortally wounded, and their father a fugitive from justice. The storm blew over, however; his powerful connexions and brilliant talents saved him from the doom which would have been awarded to one of inferior note, who had thus violated the laws of his country. The following winter he presided with all his wonted brilliancy in the Senate; and at the close of the session saw, with bitterness, that in his own county every avenue to political distinction was closed on him for ever. This sudden and utter extinction of all his aspiring hopes was not to be borne; and he resolved, without delay, to put in execution a scheme for aggrandizing his fallen fortunes, which was already matured in his own mind.

Mrs. Fitzgerald remained in New York until the spring opened, and then accompanied her husband to the West, after obtaining a promise from their friends to visit them in their forest home.

The promise had been frequently urged by both husband and wife, and the visit claimed, but it had been postponed for so long a time that all hope of ever seeing them had expired, when suddenly Col. Alwin arrived at the island, accompanied by his daughters.

They were welcomed with eager delight, and Col. Alwin assured his fair hostess that they had determined on spending the ensuing summer with her, provided they could tempt her in the fall to leave her happy home and return with them to New York.

CHAPTER III.

THE last beams of the sun still lingered on the tree tops, when a long low boat shot around a point of land, which brought in view the island with its white buildings gleaming through the foliage. It appeared to be crowded with passengers, for several groups of men were scattered over the deck.

"There is the bourne of your wishes, Mr. Zavala," said one of the passengers, raising his voice to attract the attention of the person he addressed. "A pretty place that for a man who is weary of the world, which I suspect, however, is not the case with its owner."

"By Heaven! a perfect Paradise!" exclaimed a young man who was reclining on the deck, his head supported by a pair of saddle-bags, and holding in his hand a small volume. As he spoke, he raised himself and gazed long and earnestly on the scene; speaking half-unconsciously, he continued—

"This reminds me of my own southern clime; the greenness—the beauty—the luxuriance of vegetation, with this bland air blowing upon my temples, bring back the memory of my home. Yon portico too, with its white columns peeping through the trees, looks wondrously familiar. I could fancy my mother and the dark-eyed Inez there, ready to welcome their wanderer to their hearts."

A shadow passed over his face, as he repeated the name of Inez in a low tone, as though there were reproachful memories linked with it. The person who thus spoke might have numbered twenty-eight summers. No one could dispute his title to the epithet of handsome, for he had a bright clear eye, a broad forehead, shaded by curls of raven hair, and a well-formed mouth and chin. Yet, in the curve of those red lips, was an expression of sarcastic bitterness, which deteriorated from the dark beauty of the upper part of the face; and in the flashing glance of those dark eyes, was that which led an observer to believe, that when the passions of the man were aroused, or his interests at stake, he would stop at nothing to gain his ends.

Near him was an athletic black, who, overhearing his master's soliloquy, took it on himself to reply to it.

"Ah, Massa Zavala, you may say dey bin lookin' for you. Missis will say dat you no care for her, and Miss Inez will sigh, and her beautiful eyes will fill wid de salt tears; but she no say what she think o' your course o' conduct, runnin' away to dis island arter the kurnel, when you ought to be on your own plantation."

The young man looked displeased.

"Corporal, you presume on the liberty I have allowed you. Remember, sir, you are not my mentor."

"I don't adzackly know what dat means; but de Lord above knows if it's anything dat can be useful to you, Massa Zavala, I is willin' to be it. I have been wid you, boy and man, dese many years, and I feels sort o' 'countable to the Missis for your conduct; so I thought I mought make bold to speak my mind, tho' I see it's onpossible to turn you."

"You old simpleton, do you think my mother sent you with me to act as my guide? Let me hear no more of your croaking. I shall answer to her for my own conduct."

"Ah, Massa Zavala, you bin away now dese two years, and you is in no hurry to get home agin. Your heart is not in de right place, and *she* will think so too, though she won't say it, for she is the sweetest and best-natured young lady in de worl'; and as pretty as others too, though you hab forgot her witching ways now you is not wid her. Ah, Massa, de true heart is better worth dan de bright smile."

"Really, Corporal, you are quite poetic," said the young man, mockingly. "I shall not fail to remember your words, though I hope you do not mean to imply that no true hearts are to be found elsewhere."

"No, sir; I couldn't be so onpolite. There are many other beautiful ladies as true and good as Miss Inez, but they no feel to you like one who's bin lovin' you ever since she was a *leetle* girl."

"Yes, with a cousin's love. No more, old man; so a truce to your sage remarks. I know best what suits my own inclinations and interests, so you will obey me in future, without making comments on my conduct. Get my things together and be ready to leave the boat so soon as it lands."

We will now return to those we left on the portico.

The young ladies had scarcely seated themselves, when their attention was attracted by a song borne upon the evening breeze; a wild, yet harmonious chant, which came in fitful snatches to the ear.

The three started up, for each one recognised a rude strain familiar to the boatmen who plied their rough craft on the Ohio. Mrs. Fitzgerald consigned her sleeping child to a servant who was summoned from the house, and each of her young companions linked an arm within hers, and hurried down the lawn. They reached the pier which had been constructed for the accommodation of water craft, just as the boat rounded a small promontory about a hundred yards from them. Isabel leaned eagerly forward, and as a tall figure stood conspicuous among a group upon the deck, she exclaimed—"There is Charles; look, Julie, he is waving his handkerchief."

"I think you are mistaken; that gentleman is much taller than Russell. No; it cannot be he."

As the boat drew nearer, the ladies receded from the landing, and took shelter beneath a clump of trees near enough to observe all that passed, without themselves becoming the subject of remark to those on board.

Col. Alwin came from the house, and in a few moments had welcomed the same tall personage, who was greeted by him as an old acquaintance, and they were soon absorbed in earnest conversation.

After landing her passenger, the boat again swung round, and floated down the river.

"Oh Julie—Julie, it is your shadow!" exclaimed the laughing Isabel, with an arch glance at her friend, as the gentlemen approached them, and the younger one came forward to offer his greetings. "Most noble knight," she continued, in a mock heroic tone, "we two forsaken damsels do extend unto you a most hearty welcome, albeit we were unapprised of your intention to honour us with a visit."

"As the flower is fabled to turn to the sun, I follow the light of your eyes, fair lady," he replied in the same strain, pressing her offered hand to his lips, while he only bowed low on the one less cordially extended to him by Miss de Bourg, while a flush that seemed almost painful burned on her cheek. Zavala glanced at her face as he raised his eyes, and an expression of wounded pride passed over his haughty features, as he read in her averted looks the evident pain his arrival had given her; but it was quickly succeeded by a

flash of exultation, as some sudden recollection seemed to cross his mind.

At that moment Fitzgerald joined them, and turning towards him, Col. Alwin said—

"I have been disappointed in the arrival of my secretary, but here is an old acquaintance of yours."

"Ah, you are welcome, Zavala, to our forest home. We shall endeavour to detain you among us as long as possible, and for that purpose I shall expect our fair friends to exercise their fascinations until you will feel like one bound in Circean spells." Turning to Col. Alwin, he continued with a smile, "your disappointment, my friend, cannot be very great, for you can have little use for a secretary in these deep forests, unless you are engaged in compiling the reflexions of a recluse from actual experience."

For an instant the keen eye of Col. Alwin rested upon the face of Fitzgerald, as if to read his inmost soul. Apparently satisfied with the look of open candour and benevolence which characterized his features, he turned away and addressed Zavala. A quiet smile played around his lips as he inquired—

"To what cause they were indebted for the pleasure of seeing him?"

"I bring news of great importance to you, and at your earliest convenience I wish to obtain a private interview, that I may lay it before you."

Alwin bowed, and Mrs. Fitzgerald proposed returning to the house. She led the way, and they entered a spacious hall furnished in rich yet massive style. This opened into a saloon fitted up with that magnificent taste for which both herself and husband were distinguished. Large mirrors nearly lined the walls; while the carpet looked as if the flower spirits had conspired to weave a web so like their living children, that the eye was almost deceived by the accuracy of the resemblance. The furniture had been selected by one possessing the eye of an artist for effect, and the taste of a poetic mind for the beautiful. Everything was in harmony, and few could have entered that apartment and not have felt the charm with which its graceful genius had invested every arrangement. Quaintly carved tables occupied the corners of the apartment on which were the latest books from the English press, with portfolios of engravings, and the many graceful trifles which an elegant woman collects around her. A harp stood near one of the windows, and a guitar rested against the wall near it. It was evident that the owners of this charming retreat understood the art of obtaining all the "means and appliances" to speed the lagging steps of Time, should they linger too heavily.

Without, the scene was beautiful. The lingering twilight had yielded to the mellow beams of the young moon; the lawn in many places lay in deep shadow; in others, the moonlight was quietly sleeping upon the level turf; while tufts of violets scented the soft

summer air with their fragrance. In the distance *la belle rivière*, reduced from a mighty current to a narrow limpid stream, gleamed like a sheet of silver, forming altogether a scene of beauty rarely surpassed.

"This is, indeed, a charming place," said Zavala, after gazing around him a few moments. "You are fortunate, Mrs. Fitzgerald, in the selection your husband has made; in such a romantic solitude I could be content to dwell for ever with a beloved object."

"The natural situation is indeed very fine, and we have done much towards improving it; but believe me," she continued with a smile, "one of your restless mind could not be contented in any solitude, however charming, nor with any object, however beloved. Man's mind was not formed alone for the quiet home pleasures of domestic life; and so strongly am I of that opinion, that I believe if our mother Eve had not eaten the apple, Adam would untempted have tasted it for the sake of change."

"Our sex are obliged to you, Madam, and I am too gallant to assert that our common grandmother only was to blame. The serpent alone could tempt her, but woman, lovely woman, was sufficient to beguile the unfortunate Adam from his duty to his Maker. But am I to infer that you are more contented here than my friend Fitzgerald?"

"I am quite happy here. I have enjoyed the gaieties of several London seasons, and they have wearied me. The simple pleasures of nature are far before them in my estimation: but I could wish for a wider sphere for my husband. I have occasionally detected Mr. Fitzgerald in a listless mood, as though he found little interest in his daily employments; and I have at such moments feared that the active world without was more in his thoughts than those around him."

"Nay, Margaret," replied Fitzgerald, "that was scarcely a fair judgment. At no moment of our wedded life would I have exchanged your society for that of the most brilliant circle. There are seasons in the existence of every man in which the monotony of every-day life is almost insupportable. I have at times wearied of the tameness of a life without action, but the feeling soon passed away. I cannot watch the growth of the flowers as you do, or find companionship with the song of birds, or the many voices with which nature is gifted. There is 'a beauty in the leaf, and a glory in the flower,' but not enough to occupy a mind accustomed to the wildest excitement from youth to manhood. I am an Irishman; I have existed in scenes of turmoil and strife from boyhood, and I feel that I am yet too young to sink into the mere man of books, careless of what is passing in the world around me. Yet, believe me, I am happy here."

Col. Alwin listened with absorbing interest to the speakers, and their words appeared to afford him a degree of gratification which he was unwilling to allow others to observe. With a bow to the lady he said—

"It were treason against love and beauty to doubt it. Yet I must sympathize with my friend Fitzgerald. Man was made for action. I could sooner die than curb my spirit down to so tame an existence: I should be like an imprisoned eagle, beating his pinions against the bars that confine him, and longing to wing his way above the clouds, and be as free as the uncurbed winds. I have often thought what a glorious sensation it must be to soar above the earth, monarch of the air, forcing all others of his tribe to yield to his power. Heavens! what a destiny—could one man possess such sway upon earth!"

His eye kindled, and for a few moments his thoughts seemed to have travelled far into the future, which his imagination was shadowing forth with all the glory and pomp of undisputed power. The spell was broken by Fitzgerald.

"There is one man in the world who aims at such a destiny now. The hero who is so rapidly revolutionizing Europe is ambitious of universal empire, or I am much mistaken. Napoleon will wear a brighter crown than ever encircled the brow of any man, and rule over a wider extent of country than any emperor since the days of Rome's greatest splendour."

"Glorious—enviable destiny!" said Col. Alwin, "such a one were worth living and toiling for. He accomplished all himself too. Risen almost from the ranks—a subaltern—a conqueror—and now a consul. The next step will be to assume the imperial purple; a fate worthy so godlike a spirit."

"And the next step," added Fitzgerald, "may be a scaffold or a prison."

"Believe it not; he is Fate's peculiar child—his destiny will conquer all things, or for destiny read energy—for the energies of such a mind can conquer fate itself. But a truce to political affairs. Don Pedro, I hope that Russell was not seriously indisposed."

"He had been quite ill, but was recovering rapidly when I left him."

"Ill!" exclaimed the two girls at the same moment; and Isabel continued: "Why have you left him to the care of strangers, Don Pedro? Methinks it was not well done in one who professes to be his friend."

"Pardon me, Miss Alwin, for such a breach of friendship; but in truth I was compelled to come on, and Russell himself urged me to do so. As I had no fears of a fatal termination to his illness, I consented to do so," said Zavala, glancing rapidly from Isabel to Julie; and his brow darkened as he beheld the blanched cheek and quivering lip of the latter, though she bent over an engraving she pretended to be examining, to conceal her emotion. "He is a lucky fellow to excite so much interest in two fair ladies," he bitterly added. "I could almost consent to endure his sufferings, to be sure of the same sympathy."

"Ah, we should be unjust and ungrateful if we loved him not,"

said Isabel in a tone of deep feeling. "He has been our companion, our brother from childhood, and never were sisters more tenderly cared for, more fondly loved, than are we by Charles Russell."

"I do not doubt it," replied Zavala, with a scarcely repressed sneer, "though I am not disposed to think him entitled to praise for loving, where 'twere a crime against our natures not to love."

Isabel merely acknowledged the compliment by a smile, and Julie sat with her face shaded by her hand, a chilled and sickening feeling at her heart. She was frightened at her own emotion; a fount of painful feeling appeared suddenly opened in her heart, and silently she recalled the past incidents of her life. Throughout her whole life Russell had been her companion, her friend, but never her lover; why, then, should her heart have felt the icy chill which rushed through it, and her brow become pale as marble, when she heard his illness announced. A fearful light had suddenly flashed on her mind, revealing the secrets of its prison house. The voices of the rest of the party sounded in her ears, but they conveyed no meaning to her, until Isabel touched her and playfully said:

"Awake, dreamer, and tell us of your adventures in the land of visions. Heavens, Julie, your hand is as cold as that of the dead! Are you ill, dearest?"

"No, ah no, never better." She felt that Zavala's eyes were upon her, endeavouring to read her minutest soul, and with a brief apology she left the room. His eyes dwelt for a moment upon the doorway through which her form vanished, and turning to Isabel, he said:

"Miss de Bourg appears out of spirits. I am sorry that even the arrival of an old friend cannot reanimate her. Do you know of any cause she has for melancholy?"

"Oh no; 'tis merely the folding of the spirit's wing over the ethereal essence of the soul, when the finely tempered nerves feel the necessity of rest. Julie is usually the life of our circle; she is always lively and good tempered; in a word companionable, for she has the art of adapting herself to the prevailing whim of the moment better than any one I have known. I would give much to possess the womanly benevolence of feeling she carries with her in the petty occurrences of everyday life. To make home happy is her highest ambition; to spread a charm over the little nothings which make up so large a part of our daily existence, seems her peculiar excellence."

"Ah, Miss Alwin, what a picture you have drawn for me to dwell on and admire! Already too lovely in my eyes, it needed not your encomium to exalt her in my estimation. Julie de Bourg is the star of my destiny; tell me, give me a gleam of hope—is there *no* avenue to her heart, for hitherto I have been baffled in my efforts to find one. More than once has my spirit been rebuked before her, and I have vowed in my anger never to see her more; yet here I am, drawn, fascinated to the spot that contains her. Oh, Isabel, I must win this peerless girl or die."

"This inquiry must be addressed to Julie herself, Don Pedro.

She *has* a heart, I assure you, overflowing with the fairest and most beautiful affections. Her person is lovely, but

> 'If you saw that which no eyes can see,
> The inward beauty of her lovely sprite,
> Garnished with heavenly gifts of high degree,
> Much more then would you wonder at the sight.'"

"What an enthusiast this girl is!" was the mental exclamation of Zavala, as he riveted his eyes on her animated face, and felt there was a charm in its expression which mere physical beauty cannot give. The light of a pure and lofty spirit sat enthroned on her brow, and

> "A world of dreams did seem to lie
> In her dark, and deep, and spiritual eye."

She was, indeed, an enthusiast. Possessed of the keenest sensibility and a lively imagination, the stern lessons of life had not yet taught her to control either. She had lost her mother in infancy, and although her father had been all that a parent could be to a motherless daughter, still she had sadly needed the mild and guiding hand of maternal love. Educated in a boarding-school, the two girls had returned to him graceful, elegant, and accomplished, and Col. Alwin was satisfied, for he looked on them less as beings in whom all his earthly affections were garnered, than as those by whose means he might, at some future time, strengthen his political connexions.

It was not until the shadow of misfortune began to darken around him that he appreciated the character of Isabel, or truly valued the deep devotion she always manifested towards him. Isabel was that *rara avis*, a gifted and highly cultivated woman, without the slightest tinge of pedantry or affectation; she possessed all the sensitive delicacy of her sex, which some have erroneously asserted to be incompatible with superior powers of mind. Has God denied to the perfect flower the fragrance which is its greatest charm? Why then shall the human flower be refused the same boon? Far, far better had it been for her, had cultivation brought with it a masculine independence of mind: it only imparted a deeper shade of softness, or higher tone of sentiment and feeling to her ardent and imaginative character.

Possessing sufficient intellect to appreciate the splendid talents of her father, and to feel the fascination of his rare powers of entertaining others, she worshipped the genius which could throw a beauty and a glory around the most trivial subjects. She suffered no other affection to cast a shadow over the undimmed brightness of her filial love: it was a union of admiration, confidence, and respect, which could not be shaken.

Isabel's spirits were naturally gay—they sometimes even bordered on levity—but the lightest cloud could, in a moment, depress them, and it was this susceptibility to joy or grief which caused her friends to tremble for her future happiness. Even her religion partook largely of the romance of her character. It has been beautifully said, that "a woman's heart is the temple of religion, and were its

altars thrown down and trampled on, its spirit would there find a home." To the impassioned eye of Isabel, all nature bore the stamp of its divine origin; every leaf and budding flower, and every star that gemmed the canopy of Heaven, were to her a type of the glorious and beneficent Spirit who created them all. Her religion was gorgeous as the colouring of poetry can make it; but it was founded on the only enduring basis, a firm trust in the mercy of Him "who wills and it is done." She was not a Catholic in faith, yet there was much in their imposing forms of worship which interested her imagination, and touched her heart. At home she had a large closet fitted up as an oratory, and in it she passed many hours of her life before a full length portrait of her mother, which she had copied in the costume of a Madonna; thus linking her purest aspirations with the most beautiful of human affections; and consecrating the memory of the parent who had gone down to the grave in the bloom of youth and beauty, just as the budding blossoms of her earthly paradise were beginning to exhale their sweetest fragrance over her pathway—but not, alas! before they were all withered.

Isabel was the only child of her mother, and the heart of Colonel Alwin often softened towards her when he listened to the thrilling tones of her voice, for they touched a chord in his memory which had never ceased to vibrate with tenderness, mingled with pain. No cloud had as yet dimmed her horizon, and her vivid fancy sketched the future, clothed in the bright hues which envelop every object, viewed through the flowery vista of youth and hope. Her buoyant spirit revelled in the enjoyment of the brilliant dreams which, like a fairy spell, encircled her heart. She did not dream that the hour could arrive, when the smiles which now sprang from a light heart might be worn upon the lips as a splendid drapery thrown over a mutilated statue, to conceal the desolation beneath.

"How long will you remain with us, Don Pedro?" she at length asked, arousing herself from a fit of abstraction.

"I cannot tell the exact duration of my visit. I came on a mission to Colonel Alwin, and as soon as that is fulfilled I must return to Marietta to look after Russell. As soon as he is able to travel, we will return together. When I join him, shall I tell him how much interest was manifested by you when informed of his illness?"

"Certainly; he knows that we love him. And tell him that we know not what to do without our knight-errant; so he must recover as fast as possible, and hasten his return. If he is sick, we will nurse him—if sad, we will soothe and sympathize with him."

"I shall be very faithful in the delivery of your message; but am I to understand that Miss de Bourg is included in the expressive *we?*"

"Oh, jealousy—jealousy, thou green-eyed monster!" said the laughing girl; "I cannot stay to answer you now, Don Pedro; and see, my father has risen, and is approaching you. *Au revoir*," and kissing her hand to him, she glided from the room with a mocking smile upon her lip.

CHAPTER IV.

As soon as supper was over, Colonel Alwin withdrew to his own apartment, accompanied by Zavala. He carefully closed the door and examined the deep recesses in the windows before he was satisfied that they were alone. Calmly drawing forward a table covered with loose papers, he placed the shaded lamp in such a position as to throw the light on the face of his companion, while his own remained in the shadow. These arrangements made, he seated himself, and said, in a quiet tone—

"Now, Sir, I am ready to receive your communications."

Zavala could not refrain from admiring the self-command of the man, for in the position in which he then stood, he was not certain that the tidings he was about to hear did not bring with them the destruction of all his views—nay, involve even his life. Zavala drew from his bosom a package, and presented it to him.

"Read those despatches, and then I will speak of my own private views and wishes."

Colonel Alwin took the papers, and as he broke the seal, his fingers trembled slightly. No other sign of impatience or agitation escaped him. He carefully perused the documents; and as he read, his observant companion noted that the flush of triumph mounted even to his pale temples. More than an hour was thus spent, when, slowly refolding them, and carefully locking them in his desk, he arose and walked several times across the room. Stopping suddenly before Zavala, he said quickly—almost sternly—

"Do you know the contents of those papers?"

"I do," was the concise reply.

"And are you prepared to abide by me in life or death?"

"On one condition."

"Name it."

"Miss de Bourg——"

"Of that we will speak hereafter," said Alwin, waving his hand impatiently. "When did you last hear from the South? From thence I am most anxious to gain information."

"I have private letters from my uncle, who, you are aware, is an officer of high rank in the Spanish army. The troops, dissatisfied with their present situation, are ready for any change; he assures me that very little will be necessary to induce them to struggle for a change of masters. The soldiers are entirely devoted to Gen. Zavala, and will follow wherever he leads. Your object, if I understand you correctly, is to revolutionize Mexico, and wrest from the present Chief Magistrate of the United States, the rich territory of Louisiana, which adds another gem to this fair Union. At a moment's warning, my uncle will hold himself in readiness to cross the Sabine, and thus give you an excuse for placing yourself at the head of a select body of troops, devoted to your interests. Nothing will

then be easier than to unite your forces, and defy the laws of your own country. Gen. Zavala has constant communication with some of the most influential men in the city of Mexico; and they are ready, when the first blow is struck, to range themselves on the side of those who will free them from the Spanish yoke. There is a theatre before you worthy of your abilities, and the power refused you in your own country courts your acceptance in another as fair. For myself, if my aid is of any worth, you know it is at your command, at all times, on *one* condition."

"I thank you. It is of inestimable importance to me, as no one knows better than yourself; but to gain it, Don Pedro, I am unwilling to use my authority to induce Miss de Bourg to accept you; for it seems the wayward girl refuses to listen to any proposal from you. You may think me cold and hard, but I love this girl as if she were really my child; if you can gain her consent, as I have before told you, you have mine; but of that I am hopeless; so we will consult your ambition in offering a reward proportioned to your services, with the hope that your proffered love may be more successful in other quarters."

While he spoke the brow of Zavala darkened, and it was with difficulty his impatient spirit could brook the implied impossibility of inducing any fair lady to accept the guerdon of his love.

"Allow me to try, Sir; armed with your authority, she will listen to me differently. Let her see how much to your interest it is to lend a favourable ear to my suit. I ask not for the rewards of ambition—I can gain them without your assistance. I seek the hand of your ward—her heart I will gain, if devoted love can win a woman."

Col. Alwin shook his head impatiently as he replied—

"Trust me, she will not be won by you; I know the sex—I have reasoned with her—have urged every motive that can influence or dazzle the mind, and she was still firm in her refusal. I cannot command her to marry you."

"Listen to me, Col. Alwin," replied Zavala firmly, but respectfully—"and give due weight to my words. I am acquainted with the scope and bearing of your plans; for purposes of my own, I have made myself master of their most secret details, and one sentence from me would precipitate you into a prison, from which death might be your only release. What you are now preparing to execute will brand your name as a traitor to your country and her best interests; think of the consequences to yourself, if your enterprise is discovered before it is ripe for execution, and then think how trifling in comparison are a few tears shed by a romantic girl, because you consult her interest and happiness, in commanding her to accept a man who adores her. With the hope of obtaining Miss de Bourg, I am anything you choose to make me; on the contrary—you know the alternative; choose between them."

A smile of bitter scorn curved the lips of Alwin, as he listened to the words of Zavala. For an instant, his rage, at being thus

braved by one so much his junior in years, and inferior in standing, threatened to burst forth and overwhelm the presumptuous man who dared to offer such terms to him. A moment's reflection, however, convinced him that in giving vent to his passion his safety would be compromised, and his schemes baffled. He felt that he was in the power of a man who had no scruples in the pursuit of his own wishes—who would deliberately crush him if he did not secure him to his own interests; and the anguish of the unhappy girl who was thus made a species of barter between them, sank into insignificance before the sense of his own danger.

"You speak truly," he said slowly, and with apparent effort. "If Julie consults her own happiness and mine, she will view you with different sentiments. Though it gives me more pain than, perhaps, you think my stern nature is capable of feeling, I must wound her affectionate heart, by commanding her to accept one she has assured me she can never love; I must bid her link her fate with that of the man who dares to tell the protector of the woman he professes to adore, that if she refuses to marry him, he will denounce the friend of her orphan childhood as a traitor, and, in so doing, strike a deadly blow at her happiness. 'Tis well, however, Don Pedro—we perfectly understand each other; the *only* tie that binds us together is that of interest; pledge yourself to sustain my cause, and Julie shall be yours. I am aware of the vast influence possessed by your connexions in the south-west, also that which your own talents give you; and you must pledge yourself to devote it all to my interest."

"Certainly; but Miss de Bourg must be mine before we leave the island."

"What, Sir, do you doubt my plighted word?" asked Alwin, and his eye flashed fearfully bright over the person of the other. "Do you *dare* to doubt the word of a man of honour?"

"Col. Alwin, it is useless for men placed in such a position as we now hold towards each other, to use the language of passion. You know the prize for which I contend; if you have ever loved passionately, you can excuse the ardent wish of a lover to secure the object of his affection, before being separated from her for an indefinite period of time."

"In that view your haste is excusable, though it has not much delicacy to commend it, either to my ward or myself. Since we are making a bargain, I suppose the conditions must be fulfilled. So let it be."

None but a spirit as haughty and overbearing could measure the bitterness that filled his heart, as he turned from his companion. Deeply, dearly, did he determine to avenge the implied mistrust, when the power to do so with impunity should be his.

Who, that had seen him return to the drawing-room with a smiling lip and smooth brow, could have imagined the dark tide of emotion which swelled beneath that calm exterior? His voice was as bland, his smile as frequent as though no unpleasant occurrence had

aroused his impetuous passions: as though he had not deeply implicated the happiness of one in that little circle, and that one dependent on him for protection and kindness. Did not his heart quail as he met her affectionate glance, and felt that he was then meditating the possibility of making the benefits he had conferred upon her the means of forcing her grateful heart to seal its own misery, in order to save him from the precipice on which he stood. Life! thou teachest many strange and humiliating lessons to the heart of man!

CHAPTER V.

Don Pedro Zavala was the son of a gentleman of some distinction, who had emigrated to the south-west early in life. He had there married the daughter of a Spanish officer of rank, and had assumed the family name of his wife. Don Pedro was their only child, and was the spoiled darling of both his parents. No pains were spared with his education, and at the age of twenty he set out to make the tour of Europe. Three years were consumed in this, and a fourth one devoted to visiting the most interesting portions of Asia: he was then summoned home in consequence of the death of his father, to assume the management of a large property, only encumbered with a provision for an orphan cousin whom his parents had adopted.

Madame Zavala was charmed with the great improvement in her son: externals were all the good lady regarded, and few mothers would have been dissatisfied with the appearance of the accomplished Zavala. He had studied eloquence in England, antiquities in Rome, flirting in Paris, music in Spain, smoking in Germany, and the language of flowers in Turkey. Who then shall say that he was not accomplished? He could sing, dance, write sentimental verses,—in short, he was a universal genius. But beneath all this apparent lightness, there was a deep and intense desire to become distinguished. It was not the lofty and high souled ambition, which seeks to be the benefactor of the human race, to make a name which shall be blessed by future ages: it was rather a desire for notoriety than true distinction. In a different state of society he would have been the beau Brummel of his age; but the theatre of fashion was too narrow, in the wild province of Louisiana at that day, to satisfy his desires. He determined to become a distinguished politician: he possessed many of the requisites for a leader—respectable talents, supported by influential connexions, and a degree of perseverance where a favourite object was to be attained, which generally ensured success. Zavala had already attained a height which promised a brilliant future. His character was one in which the evil predominated greatly over the good, though he was not without his redeeming points. Where his own interests were not at stake, he could be the kind friend and honourable gentleman: but

if the views of others clashed with his own, there was no species o treachery he would not practise to accomplish his own ends. His passions were violent; and when aroused, reckless of consequences, they swept all before them.

He had been one of the commissioners employed on the part of Spain to treat with Mr. Jefferson for the sale of Louisiana, and for the last two years he had resided principally in Washington. There he formed an intimate acquaintance with Col. Alwin, and in common with all others looked up to him as one of the leading spirits of the day.

He had seen Miss de Bourg soon after her first appearance in society, and loved her. His peculiar disposition led him to persevere in what he had once undertaken until he succeeded in accomplishing his views. To this, Julie owed his unwelcome assiduities. Vainly did she endeavour to discourage him: it appeared a matter of indifference to Don Pedro whether she smiled or frowned on him, so long as he succeeded in keeping aloof all other competitors for her favour. In the eagerness of his pursuit, he forgot that there was a heart breaking in silence over his coldness and neglect—one he had found full of life and hope, a creature to be cherished with the fondest love, yet whom he had utterly forsaken. He had wooed and won the fair and gentle orphan cousin; and now without a pang, he trampled on the bruised heart, which had trusted to him its every hope of happiness. He cast the memory of the past away—to him it was as though it had not been; and he forgot, ay, *forgot*, that she could mourn over the destruction of hopes he had been at such pains to excite.

He arrived at the island, exulting in the thought that he possessed the means of compelling the scornful beauty he had so long and so unsuccessfully pursued, to regard him with more complacency.

No principle of delicacy restrained him from using the means thus placed within his grasp; his vanity prevented him from believing the aversion of Julie too deeply rooted to be overcome, when she found no alternative remaining to her, except the offer of the hand she had hitherto so pertinaciously refused. If he cast a thought towards the forsaken Inez, it was to wonder how the mild and timid girl could ever have elicited a feeling of preference in the heart now so deeply enthralled by the fascinations of the beautiful, the intellectual, and the elegant Julie.

At night when he retired to his apartment, he found the Corporal with looks of solemn importance, guarding a package of papers, which, unknown to Zavala, had been forwarded with letters to Col. Alwin.

"Well, Massa Zavala," said he; "now you have seen Miss Julie, I hope you is glad to perskiver dat Missis and Miss Inez has not forgot you."

"Go to the devil!" was the polite response of the impatient southerner, venting the irritation which the events of the evening had engendered, on the first defenceless object that came under his observation. "You are eternally croaking of 'Missis' and 'Miss

Inez,' until I am sick of it. If your ugly black head can think of nothing else, at least let me alone."

The Corporal replied with an air of offended dignity—

"Well, sir, it is onpossible for me to perskiver how is dat any body doesn't like to hear o' dere own nat'ral born relations. I is sorry to 'fend you, Sir, but I wish you had more perliteness, dan to ha' sent me to de debbil, case I shouldn't like to keep such disrespectable company. As to my head bein' black, dat's neither here nor dere. I is de color God chuse to make me, and I can't say but I is satisfied—when I is at *home*."

"There again, you confounded old blunderpate. Is that ever to be the burden of your song? Go—go, old man. I will return home when it suits me, and not before; you had best take care, or you may provoke me to strike you by talking to me in such a strain, when I am in a passion."

The old man drew up his tall form to its greatest height, and spoke in a faltering voice—

"It is de fust threat o' de kind, Massa Zavala, you has ever uttered to me; I lived with your father, was *raised* wi' him, and he never offered to lay the weight of his little finger on me, 'cept in kindness. If you can strike de grey-headed negro dat has carried you in his arms, an' rode you on his back, when you was a little fellow, you mus' do so; his ole heart can only break over the ingratitude of the child he has loved as his own."

Zavala was struck, and, in spite of himself, softened; after a pause, he spoke to his faithful attendant with his usual kindness of manner.

"Forgive me, Corporal. I was angry with others, and vented my spleen on you. You know how highly I value your services, my faithful old friend. So pray forget that I said any thing to wound you. Leave me now to read my letters alone."

"I 'cept your 'pology, Massa Zavala, and hope you will see the sense of my interference wid your pleasures in de time to come."

He walked off, still murmuring words about the home to which his affections seemed so fondly to cling, and Zavala opened his letters. The first was from his mother, and ran as follows:—

"*Villa d'Esperanza.*

"My Dearly Beloved Son,—I was much surprised, and a little chagrined when I received your last letters, announcing the probability of a still more protracted absence. Ah, Zavala, Zavala—I fear your heart is no longer among your own people, or you would not linger so long away from those who love you.

"I hear that you are fascinated by one as lovely as she is amiable. God forbid that this should be so! I look on the pale cheek of Inez, and behold her ill-suppressed dejection, and my heart disowns you as my son if you can do aught to wound the sweet soother of my sorrows—the companion of my solitary hours. A Zavala you cannot be, if the high and chivalrous spirit of honour dwell not

in your heart. Return, and vindicate yourself, my noble son, and let your presence cheer the heart of your widowed mother. God bless you.

"MARIA JOSEPHINE ZAVALA."

"P. S.—All is going on well on the plantation, and the negroes often inquire if the master is ever coming home again."

Zavala turned to the next letter. It was directed in a delicate, graceful hand, and his heart reproached him, when he recalled the delight which the sight of that writing had once afforded him. He read the motto stamped on the seal, "I trust thee."

"Poor, poor Inez," he murmured. "Would to God I could still love thee as in our early days; but it may not be—I am thralled, enslaved by another, and that one loves me not. A pretty game of cross-purposes is life at the best."

He tore open the envelope, and read the words of trusting affection addressed to him.

"*Villa d'Esperanza.*

"Many, many weeks have elapsed, dear Zavala, since we have received a line from you. Why this neglect? Are you ill, or only absorbed by the new friendships you have formed, to the exclusion of all thoughts of home and early ties? Imagine not that I wish to upbraid you; my heart would not suffer me to inflict upon you so severe a wrong, as to harbour one thought of distrust towards my friend, my companion, my guide from early infancy.

"Your mother pines over your long absence, and attributes your voluntary sojourn among strangers to want of affection for her. I —what shall I say of myself? yet why conceal the truth from one who has ever read my heart? I look back upon the time which is past since we parted, with a blank, solitary feeling; it merely presents the record of daily duties, unenlivened by the presence of any object that can impart an interest to them. I had numbered the days which were to elapse before your promised return, and as each one closed, I said, 'he will soon be here.' Alas, the hour has passed, and the weight of disappointment clings heavily to my heart.

"I have pursued my usual occupations with the pleasing thought that they were recommended by you. I have re-perused the books we read together, and dwelt on the passages marked by your hand. While thus employed, I could imagine that your spirit was hovering around me; would that mine could wing its way to you and breathe into your heart my unceasing prayer for your safe and happy return! Bright eyes and beaming smiles may detain you from your home, but fond thoughts and cherished memories must cling around the circle in which the earliest years of your life have been passed.

"Three times have my favourite flowers budded, bloomed, and shed their leaves since your shadow has darkened the door of your dwelling, and my heart grows weary of this long, long separation.

"I have read your letters until their contents are so indelibly engraven on my memory that time will fail to erase them from its tablets. Return to the hearts that love you—to those whose happiness is dependent on yours.

"I fear that I have expressed my feelings too openly. You have mingled in the world of fashion since we met; and my freedom of language, when compared with the reserve of those who have been taught to control their feelings by the omnipotent voice of custom, may render my simplicity a fault in your eyes. Remember, in excuse, that it was you who first taught me to confide to you my every thought; and attribute it not to a want of delicacy, but to my unwavering trust in your honour and affection.

"INEZ."

The letter dropped from his hand.

"Poor, deceived, deluded child! I fear she will feel my desertion more than I thought; but she is young; the sunshine will soon return to her brow, the buoyancy to her heart. *I* forget; why shall she not do so too?"

And it was by his own heartless standard he measured the feelings of a pure and romantic girl, who had lavished on a worthless idol, the deep and impassioned tenderness of an inexperienced heart.

"A fearful gift upon thy heart is laid,
Woman!—a power to suffer and to love."

CHAPTER VI.

MANY weeks had elapsed since Zavala had joined Russell, and still they were in the small village of Marietta, alternately holding converse with its inhabitants, and joining parties for fishing or hunting.

It was a calm, clear night, and the countless lamps of heaven were shining in all their pure and holy beauty, hushing the stormy passions of the inhabitants of earth, as they looked up to the bright worlds, which the imagination would fain people with beings of a higher, purer order.

The evening was cool, and the two gentlemen had taken refuge within doors. A table was placed near the centre of the room, on which lights were burning. Zavala was employed in reading, and Russell, also, took up a book in which he soon appeared completely absorbed. A stranger glancing at the two gentlemen might have wondered how they came to occupy their present quarters, so little in unison was their own appearance with that of things around them.

The house consisted of a single room constructed of hewn logs, without plaster or woodwork of any kind in the interior, if we except a shelf of pine nailed over the fire-place, which supported sundry implements of the chase, a file of old newspapers, and a bundle of almanacs reaching as far back as the middle of the last century. However rude, it was a comfortable apartment, for the walls were

carefully chinked and newly whitewashed; the uneven floor was covered with a carpet of home manufacture, and the window curtains and coverlet for the bed were as white as drifted snow.

The head of Russell was bent slightly forward, and the glare of the lamp fell full on his features It was a face of striking and noble beauty. His broad brow resembled in form and development, the forehead we see in the picture of Napoleon; full dark eyes, a straight and well formed nose, and a mouth and chin of remarkable symmetry, though the deepened curve of the lips gave the former a somewhat haughty expression. His hair grew high on his temples, and the pallor of his recent illness imparted to his brow a yet more marked and intellectual expression. He could not have numbered more than twenty-three summers, and it was evident that such sorrows as leave a scar behind, had never dimmed his bright hopes. In the expression of his clear eye might be read the aspirations of a mind conscious of its powers, and ready to devote every energy to the acquisition of fame and honour, when called on to take his part in the busy arena of public life.

Zavala at length raised his eyes as if to address Russell, and a shade of surprise passed over his features as he marked the rapt expression of his countenance, while he gazed upon his book, without attempting to turn a leaf. He was evidently endeavouring to discover the bent of his companion's thoughts, as he scanned the lineaments of a face with whose changes he had been long familiar.

The eye of Zavala dwelt long and earnestly upon his features; and then seeking a clue to his abstraction, he leaned slightly forward so as to bring the unturned page within the scope of his vision. A painful convulsion contracted his heart as he beheld a pencil sketch of a female head, which at a glance he recognised as that of Julie de Bourg. A burning flush passed over his features, and, for the first time, the true cause of his own rejection flashed upon his mind. The fiend of jealousy sprang to life in his heart, and he felt the hot blood rushing to his brow, as he marked the calm pleasure of the young lover. At length he spoke.

"What fair lady's image have you there, Russell?" The face of the young man flushed deeply, and he hastily folded the drawing in its cover.

"It is only a sketch of my own. It reminds me of one I admire, and therefore I take pleasure in contemplating it."

"Certainly; nothing can be more natural. I did not know that you ever amused yourself in such a manner. I consider it a delightful accomplishment to be able to transfer the lineaments of a dear friend to paper to console us for her absence. May I ask which of your fair companions you have thus distinguished?—or if you possess a likeness of both?"

"Why should you suppose it to be the likeness of either? There are other ladies as fair———"

"But none so attractive to you as your guardian's lovely ward.

Eh, Russell? Am I not correct in my surmise? Nay, man, you need not blush and look as if detected in some folly. You are not the first man who has fallen in love without intending to do so. I have a reason for asking, Charles; pray tell me truly if that likeness, which you so tenaciously grasp, is not a sketch of Julie de Bourg?"

"By what right do you ask such a question?" said Russell, proudly rising from his seat.

"By the right of an affianced husband, *Now* will you answer me?"

"You!—*you!* the affianced husband of Julie de Bourg? How long since this occurred, Don Pedro? If it is true, she must have changed much within a few short weeks. I demand in my turn, when, and under what circumstances, she consented to accept you?"

Zavala reflected a moment. Though Julie was still in profound ignorance of the pledge of her guardian, he thought something might be gained by making a breach between those who he felt convinced were not yet declared lovers.

I will satisfy you, Charles, though the engagement, for some reason known only to Colonel Alwin, is to be kept secret a short time. He stands pledged to give me the hand of Julie in a few months."

"*He* stands pledged! He could not—upright and honourable as I know him to be in other affairs, he could not have bartered away the hand of a helpless girl for any ulterior benefit to himself. Will you state explicitly, Don Pedro, whether Miss de Bourg is a party to this contract, or if her consent is to be wrung from her by representing to her the service she can render Colonel Alwin by binding you more securely to his interests?"

"Mr. Russell, I should imagine you too well acquainted with the nice sense of honour which distinguishes Colonel Alwin to impute such dishonour to him. Let it suffice that Miss de Bourg will be a voluntary bride. The wishes of her guardian have ever influenced her greatly, and why she should rebel against them when love, happiness, and splendour are offered her, I know not, unless the spirit of contradiction is stronger in her than it often is in her capricious sex. She knows the value of wealth and position too well to reject one who offers her what I am so fortunate as to possess."

"And you?—are you willing to be accepted as the possessor of a fortune which gives you your principal value in her estimation? If she *can* be thus won, I have greatly mistaken her character."

"I believe you have. Miss de Bourg is, like the rest of the world, easily dazzled by a brilliant prospect. She knows full well that she is too bright a gem to be cast into the privacy of domestic life. She is formed to grace the circles of gaiety and fashion, and there, as my wife, she will shine the admired of all admirers. For myself, I am not romantic; I have outlived the little sentiment with which nature gifted me, and I am quite content to take Julie on her own terms; she will love me as much as ninety-nine out of a hundred of your true lovers care for each other in two years after marriage. Indeed, so far as my own observation goes, I think those who

enter into the holy bonds of matrimony with such a vast quantity of love, contrive to use it up in a wonderfully short time."

"And therefore you are content to dispense with it altogether; you are fortunate in being easily satisfied. *I* could not consent to be accepted merely as an appendage to my fortune. However, you may be far happier than one of a more exacting temper. I would say with the poet—

'Deep in the secret foldings of my heart
She lived with life, and far the dearer she.'

No common love could induce me to yield my happiness to the keeping of another. The presiding spirit of my home must be to me a divinity, though to others a mere mortal."

"Ah! you are for love and young romance. Believe me it is the dream of a mind unpractised in the ways of the world. A few years hence your opinion will have strangely altered."

"Possibly, though I do not believe it; but you have not yet replied to my question. Is Miss de Bourg aware of the engagement her guardian has formed for her?"

"And if she is not?"

"I must then say that the man who can avail himself of her protector's authority to wring from her her consent to accept him, is destitute of the feelings and principles of a gentleman."

"This to me!" exclaimed Zavala, starting up.

"This—ay—and more too. I have listened calmly when you spoke lightly of one I feel myself bound to defend. I am aware, Don Pedro, that Miss de Bourg has more than once declined the honour of your alliance. It may have become necessary to Col. Alwin to receive your co-operation in his schemes, and Julie is to be the sacrifice to his interests; but *I* will not stand calmly by and see this crying sin against her happiness consummated."

While Russell spoke, Zavala had time for reflection. Nothing could be gained by a breach between them at such a crisis, and all might be lost. The deadly insult he had received should be bitterly atoned for, but at a more convenient season. His wrath would lose nothing of its intensity by nursing it until the opportunity for an explosion came. He at length spoke in a deep husky tone—

"Russell, you have said that to me which man seldom forgives; yet, difficult as it is, I will prove myself capable of doing so. Had any other uttered those words, his life had been the forfeit; but we have been friends of long standing, and a few idle words about a woman must not sever that friendship. I forgive you, for you were too much excited to know the force of your words. I did not mean to convey to your mind the belief that Miss de Bourg is in ignorance of the engagement formed for her by Col. Alwin. Here is the proof," and he drew from his pocket a ring which Russell knew too well. It had belonged to her mother, and Julie had never suffered it to leave her finger until now. Russell recoiled, and visibly changed colour.

"This was taken from Miss de Bourg's hand at our last interview," said Zavala, with ill-concealed triumph. "Now are you convinced?"

"I am; too fatally convinced. Can such perfidy exist in the form of an angel? Thus I destroy the image of a being I have considered free from earthly frailty."

He held the sketch over the lamp. Zavala arrested his hand.

"Let me have it. Demand any, every service, and it is yours for this."

Russell drew back haughtily.

"I ask no service from you, Don Pedro. I will accept of none. All your wealth ten times told could not purchase it. It was sketched for my gratification, and the hand that traced shall destroy it."

"Well, be it so; I am satisfied that it is no longer in your possession."

Russell made no reply, and Zavala resumed his book, though his mind was far from its contents; he was employed in devising a scheme to prevent the deception he had practised on his companion from being unfolded. He knew that many obstacles remained in his way to the attainment of Julie's consent to accept him, and he considered himself by no means secure in the game he was playing. He thought the most certain plan would be to work on the pride of Russell, by inducing him to believe Miss de Bourg a mercenary coquette, who had lured him on from no better feeling than vanity. He trusted that an appearance of coldness on the part of Russell would pique her into accepting his own attentions, and she would thus become entangled in a flirtation which his importunities, and her guardian's commands, might easily convert into an engagement. The ring had been lost by Julie, and found by him, a few hours before he last parted from her. He had forgotten to return it; and recollecting it at the moment, he made use of it to convince Russell of the perfidy of his peerless Julie.

The young lover went forth in the cool air of night, and tried to reflect with calmness. Julie—*his* Julie, whom he had considered as the embodiment of all his ideal dreams of lovely woman—a heartless, mercenary coquette! Yes, it had been asserted with such a show of truth he could not doubt, yet it was anguish to believe it.

He recalled the incidents of the past year; he remembered the unconscious language of the eyes, which are ever the best interpreters of the heart, and he felt that it was not vanity alone which whispered him that those soft dark eyes had often told him he was beloved. He had believed that a tacit understanding existed between them, that his dependent position alone prevented him from avowing his love, and seeking a return. They were both young enough to wait, and the future held out to him a brilliant promise of success in life. For the first time he regretted that he had not been born to wealth; yet his spirit scorned itself, as the thought crossed his mind that he

could so love one who could be influenced by such sordid considerations, in the most important event of her life.

"The dream is broken," he mentally murmured. "It *was* a lover's dream, or I could not so have mistaken her. I can resign her; a few months hence and the current of my existence will glide as smoothly as though no such event had for a time disturbed its tranquillity. Had she loved me it would have been far different; in that case I would have yielded her to another only with my life. Ah! it is terrible to believe that she never valued the devotion of a heart which can offer nothing to her acceptance save the affection of an honourable man, and the determination to take my place among the great and noble ones of earth."

He thought of Julie as he had last seen her, and as faithful memory reflected back the ingenuous countenance of his beloved, he could have cursed the tongue that dared to breathe a syllable which could sully that image of loveliness and purity. Yet his jealous heart gave credence to the tale he had heard. Why should he doubt it? Zavala had indeed spoken the truth; she was too bright a being to struggle with the petty cares a narrow fortune must entail upon her. *His* career was yet to be achieved by his own energy, and he mentally resolved that it should not be unworthy the acceptance of one even as highly endowed by nature as Julie de Bourg.

"The day may come," thought he, "when she shall think her ambition had been better served, had she linked her fate with that of one who would have sought to triumph for her sake, but who will now make ambition its own reward."

Deep and bitter was this blow to one of his reserved and proudly sensitive mind. With the highest sense of honour, and a depth of feeling yet unworn by contact with the busy working-day world, Russell possessed a fastidious refinement which is often the accompaniment of a high order of genius. Nothing could more deeply have wounded him than the belief that his affections had been carelessly trifled with. No pang can be keener to a high-minded and strongly feeling man, than that inflicted by the heartlessness of the woman he loves. 'Tis bitterness, indeed, to find the being he has endowed with all the attributes of an angel, falling so far below his ideal standard of perfection. To Russell it was the most exquisite suffering which could have been inflicted upon him. He could say, "I will forget her;" but forgetfulness comes not with the determination to make the effort. Half the brilliancy of the future was destroyed, and he sighed as he thought of the dreams he had indulged, in which Julie was the sharer of his lot; her affection the reward of his exertions.

CHAPTER VII.

"Isabel, my love, will you sit to me again, this morning, that may give the finishing touches to the miniature for your father?"

said Mrs. Fitzgerald to Miss Alwin as they were leaving the breakfast-room.

"Ah, yes—I had forgotten, and Julie can finish reading that beautiful poem she was enchanting us with last evening. I perceive that my father and Mr. Fitzgerald are preparing for a shooting excursion, so we shall have the morning to ourselves. I will follow you to the library immediately."

The library opened on an extensive parterre, filled with many rare and fragrant plants. Mrs. Fitzgerald was passionately fond of flowers, and a rich and various collection bloomed around her. Beyond the inclosure, the forest cast its shadows, and occasionally a gleam of water, sparkling in the sunbeams, came flashing through the waving boughs.

The room was furnished with perfect taste. Bookcases, carved in a gothic pattern, were fitted in the niches between the windows; and these were filled with standard works in English, French, and Italian. This portion, the lady of the mansion claimed as peculiarly her own. On the other side of the room was a complete law library, together with the classics, a philosophical apparatus, and maps and globes. In the centre of the floor was a large circular table, covered with things as multifarious as were the various pursuits of the family. A box filled with labelled minerals; a few sketches in water colours; a novel half opened, with a few scattered rose leaves as a mark; several articles of ladies' work, together with the journals of the day; and a glass globe containing some gold and silver fish, were the most conspicuous.

Mrs. Fitzgerald placed herself beside the table, and prepared her materials for painting. Isabel was flitting about, re-arranging everything, while Julie sought for the poem she had been called on to finish. She was pale, and the air of lassitude with which she moved soon attracted the attention of Isabel.

"For heaven's sake, Julie, tell me why you look so sad and woe-begone. Are you really suffering, or only indulging in a little private fit of the blues?"

"I am neither ill nor sad; though one is excusable for looking serious occasionally, I suppose."

"Oh, certainly; if you have a fancy for that sort of thing, I am sure we will not oppose you, although we might wish to see you smile and look as if life were not as dull as a 'thrice-told tale.' You have not been like yourself since Don Pedro left us. Can you be mourning *his* absence."

"If no other heart mourned his absence more than mine, his lot would be a desolate, for it would be a loveless one. No—dear Isabel, I was not thinking of Don Pedro just then, though I *do* think of him more frequently than I could wish. My imagination has of late invested him with a strange power over my destiny; the conviction is on my mind that he will cause me unhappiness, and it clings to me in spite of my endeavours to banish it. He returns to-

day with Charles, and though I wish to see Russell again, I dread the re-appearance of his companion."

"Nonsense, Julie, you are only a little sad this morning, and your boding imagination conjures up fancies to scare itself with. Do not suffer a vague and indefinable fear to fall on your spirits, and darken your heart."

"Since my seriousness annoys you, I will make an effort to be gay;" and she turned her face, radiant with smiles, towards her companion.

"Ah, now I know you again for the laughter-loving Julie, whose spirits, until recently, no sorrow could long cloud Smiles are so becoming to you that your lips should wear no other livery."

"Would you have me smile all the time, as our pretty Philadelphia friend, Mrs. ——, does, to show her dimples?"

"Not quite. Mrs. —— is excusable for such folly, for she can do nothing else, poor little woman! But where is the book? I perceive that our patient hostess is waiting for us."

"I do not know how I dare read before you, Mrs. Fitzgerald," said Julie, "after hearing your declamation last night. I think your personification of Lady Macbeth cannot be excelled; I felt when I retired as if I had 'supped full of horrors,' and I waked more than once with the air-drawn dagger gleaming before me."

"It was a favourite amusement of mine in girlhood," replied Mrs. Fitzgerald. "My father was a passionate admirer of Shakspeare, and from him I inherited the dramatic talent I possess. He made great efforts to render me a perfect reader of his favourite author; but you, my dear Julie, need not shrink from a comparison. I assure you it affords me the highest pleasure to listen to you."

The poem was resumed, and the pencil of the fair artist was frequently suspended to listen to the tones of that exquisite voice. It is a very rare accomplishment to read well, but it was one in which Julie excelled. Her flexible tones could well express the deepest and most varied emotions; while the play of her countenance, now glowing with impassioned feeling, and now sad and subdued, as the strain to which she was giving utterance changed its character, would have made a fine study for a painter.

She was so deeply absorbed in her employment, that she did not heed the smile which rested on the face of Mrs. Fitzgerald, until Col. Alwin touched her arm and spoke.

"Are you so much interested in your book that you have no welcome for your friends?"

"Fy! Colonel," said Zavala, advancing from the door; "you have deprived Russell and myself of a pleasure which I, at least, have never before enjoyed."

"And one of which I should never grow weary," said Russell.

Julie started up with a bright glow upon her cheek, but it faded quickly away as she caught the expression of Russell's countenance. He was holding the hand of Isabel in his own, and expressing both with voice and eyes his delight at meeting her again.

To Mrs. Fitzgerald he gave his greeting with the same appearance of cordiality, and then he turned to her. To an indifferent observer his manner would have appeared the same, but to her it spoke of change; for what is so quick as the heart of woman in detecting the coldness of one she loves? Cheek, lips, and brow speak eloquently; for are not each and all as familiar to her as the workings of her own spirit? A tone that escapes all other ears speaks audibly to her of coldness and estrangement; and Julie felt as if a blow had been suddenly struck upon her heart.

Russell tried to look as usual, but in vain. When Julie and himself had last parted, a delightful feeling of security and confidence imparted a charm to their daily association. His affection had never found words to tell her how much she was loved, but by many actions, slight, yet full of meaning, he had told her so a thousand times.

Until this moment of trial she had not known how deeply implicated her own happiness was; but her woman's pride arose to sustain her womanly weakness. In one brief moment, as she stood before him, with his searching eye fixed upon her varying cheek, she nerved her heart to endure, without apparent shrinking, the altered language of that eye; to feel the "iron enter her soul," and yet conceal her sufferings.

Ah, how much of anguish, passion, and withered affection have been bowed before the altar of human pride!

Don Pedro was conversing with Mrs. Fitzgerald, but not a word of their greeting escaped him. He saw each change in Julie's countenance, and traced to their true source the painful emotions which at one instant paled her cheek, and in the next sent a burning glow even to her temples.

His jealous heart was wrung, and in its inmost depths he execrated the man who had power to elicit such evident signs of preference. As he looked upon the ingenuous countenance before him, he wondered at Russell's credulity in believing the tale he had heard. Could one who truly loved her look in that bright, sweet face, and doubt the truth and sincerity of the heart it mirrored?

He exulted as he thought his snares were closing around her, and insulted pride and wounded affection were combining to drive her into his arms.

"She will yet be mine!" was his thought; "ay, and willingly; while this blind, love-sick boy is 'whistled down the wind.' Mine she must be—beautiful, adored, peerless being! My fancy, glowing as it is, cannot imagine a creature more transcendently lovely. Oh! with such a being to love me, to be mine in heart and soul, to give me her earnest sympathy, what might I not become!" His rhapsody was interrupted by Col. Alwin bringing forward a young stranger whom he introduced to Mrs. Fitzgerald as Mr. Graham. Russell then took him by the arm, and leading him to Isabel, said:

"I must bespeak your kind regard for my young friend here; he has been physician, nurse, everything to me during my illness"

Isabel expressed her animated thanks, and then Russell formally introduced him to Miss de Bourg. Julie had been wounded by his previous manner, but now she was piqued.

The person thus introduced was below the medium height, and with a slight but very elegant figure. His face was highly intellectual, and of a strange, unearthly beauty. His features were regular and delicate—his forehead remarkably high, smooth, and fair as that of a girl. The dark eyes which gleamed beneath the lightly-pencilled brows, had a wild, startled expression; and a profusion of pale brown hair, worn much longer than was customary, fell in large rings on his shoulders. His mouth was smiling, yet indescribably sad was that expression of mirth. An observer would have pronounced him one whose intellect had been prematurely developed, and whose mind had been stamped with sombre impressions, by the sorrows which belong not to early life. He could not have been more than twenty years of age, yet his countenance had a character, and an intellectuality, which later life generally imparts.

"Have you resided long in Marietta?" asked Isabel.

The young stranger started as the low soft tones fell on his ear, and he lifted his eyes to the brilliant face of the querist with an admiring gaze.

"No," said he, in tones as liquid as her own. "I am a wanderer. Many places have been familiar to my steps, but none have known me long. My restless spirit cannot be contented in any spot, however bright the sky above may be. I weary of all things."

Isabel listened in surprise to this strange avowal.

"You are young to confess a feeling of weariness where the bright and beautiful are to be enjoyed. I hope you will not soon tire of our society; for we will do all we can to drive the wandering demon from you."

"A demon you may well call it, Miss Alwin; for it has fastened on me, and holds me in its iron grasp. All of our house have had this demon—yet none has been so fatal as mine has been to me. This is beautiful—most beautiful," he continued, suddenly breaking off, and approaching the table to examine Mrs. Fitzgerald's work, before the surprised Isabel could make any reply to this strange speech.

"It is my daughter, herself," said Col. Alwin. "How shall I thank you, my dear Madam, for this exquisite resemblance? In after years, when time has dimmed the glowing tints of the living countenance, I can recur to this, and see my child as she was in the spring-time of life. This is indeed a delightful art. I can almost envy you the power you possess of transferring a lovely and beloved face to a senseless piece of ivory, which appears to become instinct with life and beauty beneath your touch."

"I scarcely think it worth envying," replied Mrs. Fitzgerald, with a calm, sad smile. "I once valued it highly, and made quite a collection. I still preserve the shadows of many who are tenants of

early graves, or so widely separated from me, that the faint and imperfect touches of my pencil are the only memorials I am ever likely to possess of them. I value them, it is true; but when I look on the lineaments of a face with whose every expression I was once familiar, and meet the changeless smile, the speaking eye recalling a host of unbidden memories, and see how like, yet how different it is from the original, a feeling of deeper sadness is produced, than to have no record, save memory, of a beloved face."

"Ah, I have never viewed it in that light. There is melancholy in it certainly, but there are moments in which I would give much to possess the resemblance, however imperfect, of the buried friends of early life."

"Why should you wish it?" asked the stranger, abruptly. "I have but one to remember, and her face is ever before me; at this instant, her dark piercing eyes seem to burn into my soul. Oh, 'tis misery to remember! Then why wish for a cold shadow, when fancy can bring before you the living and breathing form of the one you have loved? Believe me, it is not wise."

He spoke in so excited a tone, that Col. Alwin regarded him with astonishment; but soon the flush of aroused feeling faded from his features, and left them of almost marble paleness. He seated himself at some distance from the table, and leaning his head on his hand, seemed to forget all that was passing before him.

"Do not mind him," whispered Zavala, touching his forehead significantly. "I do not think he is quite right here; though his kindness to Russell demanded some return, and we urged him to come with us to the island. Pray, Mrs. Fitzgerald," he continued, "be kind enough to show us your collection, for I am extravagantly fond of pictures."

Mrs. Fitzgerald arose, and opening a small cabinet, took from it a case containing a dozen miniatures.

"Some great man has said, that he is rich who possesses one true friend. How fortunate then am I, who can show the shadows of twelve!" She opened a paper wrapped around a head strikingly like Miss de Bourg.

"Ah, Julie, here is the miniature of Olivia Fitzowen, whose history I have related to you in days o' lang syne."

"I remember. You thought us alike in person, though unlike in character."

"Yes; she was a belle and a coquette, and ended by eloping with a gay captain of dragoons, who broke her heart in a few hours."

"A coquette, and unlike! said Russell. "All women are alike in that respect. Hearts are the toys they trifle with, and crushed affections the garlands of triumph for a lovely brow. Is it not so, Miss de Bourg?"

There was a tone of bitterness which did not escape the ear to which it was addressed. She did not immediately answer, for she was afraid to trust to the steadiness of her voice.

"If your experience has taught you thus, Mr. Russell, I shall not, even in defence of my sex, dispute your assertion. My own particular share in your philippic I am at a loss to account for; however, as it is of no consequence, I shall not dispute my title to the epithet of coquette."

Russell's face flushed.

"Far be it from me," he said, "to be guilty of the impertinence of affixing such a title to Miss de Bourg. I have neither the power nor the inclination to dispute her right to be a trifler with the deepest and truest feelings of the human heart, for she is gifted with the beauty to ensure success in such a career, and with the wit to defend it."

"You and Julie sparring at each other!" exclaimed Isabel. "Certainly something wonderful will next happen. I who have held you up as my models of good temper, to find you actually engaged in a dispute! Pray tell me what it means?"

Russell smiled as he answered—

"I piqued Julie without intending it. Pray do not wrong my gallantry so much as to suppose me capable of disputing with a lady. Julie was not wont to take offence at such trifles."

Julie was more deeply wounded than she chose to show, and she remained silent. It was the first time she ever remembered hearing a harsh or bitter word from Charles Russell, and he had chosen her as the one on whom to vent his spleen!

CHAPTER VIII.

"I AM a fool; the veriest fool in existence, to suffer myself thus to become the sport of a thousand passions!" exclaimed Russell, when he found himself alone in his own room. "I have been ungenerous, unkind, almost insulting to the woman for whom I would sacrifice my very existence. Since that calm inquiring look beamed on me from her clear eyes, I seem to have acquired new faith in her truth, and I despise myself for so weakly yielding credence to Zavala's assertions. He, too, with that laughing demon in his eye, as he witnessed my discomfiture; and then the confident air with which he approached her. She does not love him, yet she may marry him; ambition is the curse of the high-hearted, and even this noble girl has felt its baneful influence. Faugh! it makes me sick to think that she will barter her soul for money. It destroys my faith in human nature to see one so gentle, so gifted, fall so far below my ideal standard."

He pressed his hands upon his temples, and endeavoured to quell the emotions whirling through his brain. He had passed a wretched evening, with the conflicting feelings of love, jealousy, and anger alternately swelling his heart almost to bursting. Julie had exercised admirable self-control; she allowed Zavala to sit beside her and converse with her, without deigning to cast a glance towards

the unhappy lover, who seemed bent on torturing himself as much as possible. He retired with the feeling that the beloved of his bright youth, the idol of his boyhood, the dream of his matured years, was won from him. Her voice would give music to another's home, her heart would admit another's image to occupy the place which he had once fondly believed consecrated to his own. Life has no deeper pang to bring to the young and inexperienced heart than the conviction of the falsehood of a beloved one!

"I cannot—no, I cannot lose her thus!" he exclaimed, starting from his seat. "No, no; one more effort, and then—"

He looked out; the stars were shining brightly. "I will sing beneath her window; she will recognise my voice; she will speak, and then—. Oh! I am mad, mad, yet I will try it. Music! ha! ha! —there is music in my soul to-night, when I could bathe my hand in the blood of that man who calls himself my rival. Yet not if she loves him! oh, no—her love would be his security. Let me see; I will sing the song I composed at her request. It will express my feelings, and if she ever loved me, she will respond to it. I will then tell her my hopes, my fears, and perhaps all may yet be well."

He took a guitar from its case, and unclosed a French window which opened upon the lawn, and stepped out. In the afternoon Isabel had pointed out to him the windows of the room occupied by herself and Julie, and he leaned against a tree and scanned the delicate white drapery which curtained them, with the eye of a lover. A multiflora rose, with its clusters of delicate flowers, hung on festoons around the upper part of the window, and he drew sufficiently near to pluck a sprig, which was immediately concealed in his bosom.

He possessed sufficient skill to play a very pleasing accompaniment, and his voice was rich and full toned, as it rang forth upon the still and star-lit air:

"Que je t'aime—ah, fondly stealing
On thine ear, each low fond word
Tells thee of the depths of feeling
That within my soul are stirred.
Que je t'aime, ah—que je t'aime

"One garland only life is wreathing,
But one thought, one hope, one aim,
All the love I feel is breathing
In those accents, que je t'aime!
Que je t'aime—ah—que je t'aime!"

The last note died away, yet no sign came that an unquiet heart was thirsting for the assurance his words contained. He drew near to the window, in the hope that some movement from within would assure him that his impassioned verses had not been utterly without effect. The curtain stirred, and his heart beat wildly. It was only the night wind—pshaw! why had he been silly enough to come thus early: the family had not yet retired, and his impatience had led him into serenading an empty room.

He stole around to the other wing of the building, and heard the murmur of voices in conversation. He turned towards the shrubbery, and had proceeded but a few paces when the sound of earnest words arrested his steps. Don Pedro was speaking; and he remained riveted to the spot, until the answer came, in the low soft tones which had too often found an echo in his heart to be mistaken. A high hedge of hawthorn was between himself and the speaker, and, for one instant, he stood an unobserved spectator of the interview. The full moon was rising, and Julie was standing on the open lawn listening, with a smiling lip, to the insidious words of Zavala. Ah! how he hated him as he marked the impassioned manner of his rival!

As he looked on her pure calm brow, with her dark hair parted above it; on her lovely face, to which the moonbeams seemed to impart a loftier expression—a holier charm, he could have rushed forward, kneeled at her feet, and solicited pardon for his suspicions. She raised her eyes to the face of her companion, and his spirit again writhed with jealousy. Those dark, beautiful eyes, in whose light he had so often sunned his soul, were beaming with tenderness upon another, while he was passed coldly, silently by. He convinced himself by that ingenious process of self-torture, known to lovers alone, that all he had heard, and doubted, was true; and his heart was wrung with anguish as the conviction came to it, that she was false to the love of her childish years: that the ties of early affection were sundered, and she was ready to wing her way from the home of her infancy, beneath the protection of one whose principles were unknown to her—whose character was shaded by many faults of a nature to mar the happiness of domestic life.

"Happy may you be, Julie! but as his wife, never! never can you be. The dark waters of fate will close over that bright head, and that young heart break with the weight of crushed affections. A plaything for a week—a month, perhaps, and then a neglected, forsaken wife. Ah, Julie, Julie, such had not been thy doom, had I been permitted to call thee mine!"

Blinded, maddened by jealousy, the unhappy Russell rushed back to his own apartment, where he vented the passion of his soul in some wild stanzas addressed to his lost love.

He had scarcely scrawled the last line, when the door was thrown open without ceremony, and Zavala entered.

"My dear fellow, what on earth are you doing? Writing poetry, I protest! and looking as solemn as if you were making your last will and testament, preparatory to taking a desperate leap into the dark abyss yclept eternity. Why, Russell, you appear to have lost your identity since our arrival here. The ladies have inquired for you, and think it strange that you absented yourself from their society on the first evening of your return. Col. Alwin, too, has asked for you several times."

"He is very good—they are very good," replied Russell, in a constrained manner. "I did not suppose my absence from so happy

a circle would be remarked. I did not feel very well, and therefore"——

"In short, my dear fellow, you seem to have quarrelled with the fair De Bourg. Ah, she is an exquisite creature. I have been standing in the moonlight with her, this last hour, worshipping her matchless beauty, and calling up all the powers of eloquence at my command, to inspire her with a wish to see the glorious southern sky. How beautiful is her enthusiasm! no affectation—no striving for effect. All is pure, natural, and lovely."

Poor Russell! how he writhed beneath such remarks. He, who had seen her grow up beside him, each day displaying some new charm, as a sweet flower unfolds its petals to the sun—he, who knew all her gentle witchery, to hear the acquaintance of a few short months speak thus, was more than he could bear. Zavala rattled on, careless of the wretchedness he knew he was inflicting—nay, rather enjoying it.

"When she accompanies me to the south, I have promised to give a moonlight fête, the most splendid thing of the kind that Villa d'Esperanza has ever witnessed. She of course, will be queen of the revels; ah, would that I had a coronet to place upon that matchless brow—methinks it would grace it well. But you do not appear to listen to me—where are your thoughts wandering?"

"Pardon me, I am not well," replied Russell, for he felt exhausted with the conflict of feeling which raged within him. "I shall be more in the mood to listen to your felicitations on your good fortune to-morrow."

"My dear fellow," said Zavala, as if he had just remembered the position which Russell had once held towards Miss de Bourg, "pray forgive me—I am a thoughtless creature when my feelings are excited. In the fulness of my own happiness I forgot that Julie had been more to you than a sister. I will be more thoughtful in future. I have neglected, too, a commission delegated to me by Col. Alwin. Can you listen to his message?"

"Yes, certainly, my head was never clearer," replied Russell with perfect composure, though the whirlwind of emotion within was yet at its height. Death, he felt, would be preferable to allowing his triumphant rival to witness the agony which weighed upon his soul.

"Ah, well, so much the better. Col. Alwin tells me that he has hitherto kept you in ignorance of the ultimate aim of his present movements. Of late you have pressed him to develop them to you, and as I have devoted much time to master them, he commissions me to make the whole known to you."

Russell assumed an air of interest, and prepared himself to listen attentively; for the information now offered, he had long eagerly desired to gain.

Long and animated was the conference which ensued, and at the close he arose and walked hurriedly across the floor, as if earnestly revolving what he had heard. At length he said:

"And yet you will not call this a conspiracy? By what other name shall we distinguish it? Col. Alwin employs hundreds of men to build boats for him and descend the Mississippi river under the pretext of making a settlement on the Wachitta; while beneath this specious pretence, he evidently conceals designs of the darkest nature against the interests of his native land. If I rightly understand you, he intends to revolutionize Mexico, and armed with the power thus acquired, he will proceed to wrest the South Western Territory from the United States, and make New Orleans the capital of his new empire, kingdom, or whatever he may choose to call it, for he will make himself sovereign of whatever he attempts to govern. Such is his Herculean project; and it is as impracticable as to drain the depths of the ocean. No, no, Sir, I see the end—the country will rise against him so soon as the real nature of his intentions is suspected. The people will never suffer such an invasion of their rights. This mad scheme will end in his own downfal and utter ruin."

"Listen to me, Russell. You are unacquainted with his resources, and they are many and powerful. In his own character, too, we have the best pledge of success. If determination of purpose, and constancy in the pursuit of his object, united with brilliant talent and despatch in business, can make him successful, he must be so. Nothing discourages him. The greater the difficulties he has to encounter the greater the diligence and energy he brings to overcome them; and his fortitude frequently accomplishes what to others appears impossible. As a leader he is invaluable. I would rather trust to a cause in which he had embarked all his interests than to any other man in the country."

"I am fully aware of all you can urge," said Russell, calmly but decidedly. "I have suspected this for some time, and my decision is irrevocably made. I am under the deepest obligations to Col. Alwin, and that circumstance will ever prevent me from betraying or in any manner drawing the suspicions of government upon him; but I can have no participation in his plans. I am a citizen of the United States, and no mere motives of personal aggrandizement shall ever induce me to aid in desolating my beautiful country with civil war, for such it must eventually end in. Is Fitzgerald leagued with you?"

"No, not yet. I have been feeling his pulse to see whether his ambition can be roused to fever heat, but he appears so well contented here that I am almost afraid to try him."

"He is right. Suffer him to remain at peace; he has made one escape from the turmoil and strife of bolder spirits, and found a haven of content in this Paradise; let him remain as you found him."

"And this is your final answer? You will at least take a night to reflect on it."

"Not an hour—not a moment—I am decided."

CHAPTER IX.

Every day tended to confirm the suspicions of Fitzgerald, and at last he no longer doubted that the object of Col. Alwin's visit to the unfrequented spot he inhabited was to pursue his plans, secure from the observation of the existing government. He now knew that he had sought his present asylum, reckless of the consequences which might ensue to his host and his lovely family. Resolved to be no longer duped by his guest, Fitzgerald one morning desired a private conversation with him.

"It is exactly what I have been wishing myself," said the Colonel, calmly rising and taking his arm. As they passed out he said:

"I have desired an interview for some time, but until I received some despatches which have this morning come to hand, I could not confide to you all I wished. But now I can be entirely unreserved."

"Col. Alwin," said Fitzgerald, "if, as I suspect, this confidence concerns your present machinations against the peace of your country, I wish to know nothing of them. It is scarcely possible that you can escape with impunity, and I do not wish you, by your own voluntary confession, to qualify me to act as a witness against one I have called my friend, should I ever be commanded by your country to do so. All I ask of you is to leave me in peace, and not implicate a defenceless foreigner in schemes which must call down the vengeance of your laws. Do not be the cause of driving me again from the home I have chosen for myself, and in which I have been so happy."

"Fitzgerald, you misunderstand—you misconceive my views. I have no intention of injuring my country, or the man who now holds the chief authority in it. No son of this soil would sooner fly to arms in defence of the rights and liberties of his native land than myself. I swear to you, her interests are hallowed in my eyes, and by me shall never be injured. You surely do not consider it incompatible with them to establish a new empire in that vast territory which lies west of the Mississippi? *There* my hopes point, and there will I reign with absolute authority. A more congenial fate than to be trammelled as is the President of these fair States."

"You do not seem to consider," replied Fitzgerald, "that this territory is the property of a nation at peace with the United States, nay, in alliance with them, and the Spanish government will never quietly see a province of such immense value wrested from them. There is fallacy in your arguments, for when the court of Spain complains of violated treaties, the President must hold you amenable to the laws of your country; as a subject, you must be arraigned for treason."

"My measures are so securely taken as to leave no possible chance for me to fall into the power of the government. Do you think I

would be so besotted as to risk falling under the authority of the very man whose intrigues have thwarted my highest hopes? Success is certain, and I may in safety now indulge in the boast that I will be first or nothing. I offer you the opportunity to rise with me, if you have any ambitious aspirations. If I should fall, though I repeat there is no chance of such a consummation, I will not drag you down with me; of that rest assured. Here are my proposals in writing; weigh them well, I beg, and do not resolutely turn from fortune, when she is ready to lavish upon you her brightest smiles."

Fitzgerald motioned back the offered papers.

"I dare not take them."

"Nay, you may surely read them. *That* cannot harm you, and their mere perusal pledges you to nothing."

Thus pressed upon him, Fitzgerald reluctantly took the offered papers, and Col. Alwin hastened to join Zavala, who awaited the result of the interview in his own apartment.

"What says Fitzgerald?" he anxiously inquired. "If he proves refractory, it will perplex us considerably. Affairs are at present in a critical position, and until we are *sure* of our adherents, our movements must be very cautious. Our only chance with him is to dazzle his mind with the prospect of a magnificent reward, until his honest upright sense is lulled into security. I believe with Sir Robert Walpole that every man has his price, if one could only find out what would be the temptation."

"I think I can guess it in this case," replied Alwin, with a sardonic smile. "I have left with him but now a sketch of my plans, or at least as much of them as it is desirable he should know, and I have not been true to myself if he does not eventually come into my views."

And Col. Alwin was right. With the deepest insight into human nature—into its darker and weaker points, he could read the workings of the human heart, and skilfully turn them to his own purposes. He knew that Fitzgerald was not destitute of ambition if he could once arouse it, and he had seen unmistakeable evidences that he was weary of the narrow sphere to which he was confined. His letter was worded in the most cautious and subtle manner; he dilated on the certain advantages that must accrue to him from joining in his present enterprise; he lamented that such talents as were possessed by his friend, should be buried in obscurity; and asserted that his principal motive for urging him to act in concert with him, was the wish to afford him a field on which to display the high endowments of mind which were now as useless to him as gold in an unwrought mine. He acknowledged that he wished to avail himself of the assistance his friend could afford him, and concluded by offering him an office of the highest trust in his future enterprise.

The result showed that Col. Alwin had been true to his reputation for eloquence, for Fitzgerald *was* dazzled, if not convinced. Perhaps

there are few minds entirely free from the desire to acquire fame, that bright bubble which philosophers deride, yet strive to attain. It has been the inspiring hope of the warrior, the statesman, and the poet, from Diogenes in his tub, and him who wept that he had not another world to conquer, down to the aspirants of the present day. It is the unquenchable desire which pervades all hearts, and nerves the soul to exertions which, for any other good, would be deemed too great. Strange it is, too, when we remember, that fame is but breath, and flattery cannot charm the dull cold ear of death.

The struggle in Fitzgerald's mind was long and severe; and the deciding voice came in the memory of his wife's words, uttered without dreaming of the consequences that would spring from them. She had wished for a wider career for him. She had often urged him to resume the practice of the profession for which he had been educated, and make known to the world that he was no degenerate son of that soil, whose birthright seems to be wit, eloquence, and song. He was convinced that he had lived too long in privacy—that it was quite time to emerge from his retirement, and exhibit to the admiring world the brilliant genius with which he suddenly felt himself endowed.

On the following day he sought Col. Alwin, and signified to him that he was convinced he meant no ulterior injury to his country, and on mature consideration, he thought it would be advisable to exchange his present retirement for the high trust he offered him. That gentleman expressed his pleasure, but he turned away with a sneer upon his lip, and muttered—

"Aye—the way with all mankind! Throw out a glittering bait, and they are easily hooked."

Fitzgerald little dreamed, while he indulged in visions of future greatness and usefulness in his new career, that he was the dupe, the tool of the man on whose friendship he securely relied.

After he had formally pledged himself to the conspirators, he turned to the apartments of his wife, with the intention of lulling to rest the apprehensions which had haunted her mind since the arrival of Col. Alwin, and in which he so largely participated.

It was night, and Mrs. Fitzgerald was, as usual, performing the duties of a tender mother to her infant children.

As the father approached the room, he heard the lisping tones of his boy's voice through the half-open door; he stopped, for his spirit felt rebuked as he listened to the prayer his infant lips were uttering. The child was kneeling before his mother, and her hand rested on his head, while his own were clasped over his young brow.

There is something touchingly beautiful in the homage of childhood to the great Author of our existence; the young heart awed by the mystery which surrounds that beneficent and Eternal Being, is incapable of appreciating his glories; yet offers up all its innocent aspirations to the throne of grace. Fitzgerald turned away; he felt that he was unfit to enter that sanctuary hallowed by innocence and

maternal affection. He had never felt thus before, and as he traversed the hall with heavy steps, he mentally exclaimed—

"And am I, after all, the dupe of my own worldly mind? Why do I, like a guilty being, hesitate to stand before my wife and children? I, who never yet have had cause to shrink from the glance of any man, however exalted may have been his virtues. Believing that an 'honest man's the noblest work of God,' I have pursued the tenor of my way, seeking the approbation of my own conscience alone. Now, I have it not—yet I am too deeply pledged to retract —*they* shall never think me cowardly and vacillating. What I have decided on shall be fulfilled; but I will go once more to Margaret, and calm her fears."

As he again entered the room he was struck by the scene which met his view. The youngest child had not been well for several days, and Mrs. Fitzgerald had been deprived of rest. She was now leaning back in a large chair cushioned with crimson velvet, on which rested her fair cheek; slumbers veiled the clear bright eyes, and the rosy lips seemed ready to part in smiles. One arm supported her head, and the other was wreathed around her child. The light shone full on her features, and the lover-husband thought she had never been half so beautiful nor half so dear as at that moment. He softly approached and imprinted a light kiss upon her brow.

A book was lying on the table beside her. He took it up, and glanced at the title: it was Milton's Paradise Lost, and he immediately applied it to his own situation.

"This has truly been my Paradise," he murmured, "and you, my Margaret, instead of being an Eve to tempt me to err, have been the divinity who dispensed happiness to all around, and by your wise counsels pointed out the true path. Yes—lovely and beloved, should I allow the accursed passions of the hollow and deceitful world to interfere with our happiness, and should I be doomed to suffer for it, my bitterest punishment will be that you must participate in my misery. Ah! how could I bear to see the bloom fade from that cheek, the smile from those lips, and know that I, who should have guarded thy sensitive heart from all suffering, am the cause of all! Away with such thoughts! thy future must be, shall be, more brilliant than the past has ever been."

More brilliant it might be, but never so happy to her who sought contentment in the delight of home. Fascinating, gay, and fond of amusement she certainly was; a woman so formed to shine in society must keenly enjoy its excitement. But those pleasures make up but a small part of the existence of a thinking and feeling human being; and this rare creature was one who found her truest happpiness in the exercise of the affections and charities of a noble and benevolent heart.

The reflections of Fitzgerald were interrupted by his wife, who suddenly started from her slumbers with an exclamation of terror.

"Oh Eustace—Eustace—I have had such a terrible dream;" and she veiled her eyes and shuddered at the recollection.

"What was it, dearest? You appeared to slumber calmly."

"I thought that our guest—(oh, I fear him every hour more and more!)—that he was standing on an eminence far, far above the crowd that gaped below, and he held in his hand a brilliant star. You, my husband, were climbing that steep ascent to reach the glittering bait which he held out to you as a reward for your toils. When I saw you, I shrieked and called upon your name; as the agonized cry reached your ears, you turned, when he said, in a voice of thunder, 'Tis more impossible to return than to finish the ascent;' and you smiled and waved your hand—oh, that smile—it was terrible! there was recklessness, despair, and determination, all blended in its ghastly glare. When you had at last climbed to the summit, and your hand was put forth to grasp the prize, a fiery bolt was hurled from the clouds above you, and both seemed swallowed up in its flames. At that moment I awoke."

"What phantasy, my dear Margaret! You have suffered your mind to dwell on the mystery which surrounds our guest, until your sleeping visions have borrowed their hue from your waking ones. Believe me, Col. Alwin would sooner serve than injure us."

Mrs. Fitzgerald looked keenly at her husband as he thus spoke, and she quickly detected a change in his countenance, though he endeavoured to conceal from her the impression her strange vision had made upon him. She clasped his hand and earnestly said:

"Tell me, Eustace—and I conjure you, as you love me, do not deceive me—are you aware of the plans Col. Alwin is now maturing? Oh, my dear, dear husband, do not be led away by this intriguing man to embroil yourself with the government of the country which has afforded us an asylum from oppression."

"Pooh, Margaret, do you suppose I could be induced to give my support to measures that would tend to subvert the government? I thought you had more respect for my understanding and principles."

"I fear you will be deceived, and involved in a dangerous difficulty before you are aware of it. I know that to a man of Col. Alwin's spirit revenge is sweet, and to deal a deadly blow at the prosperity of the country while under its present rulers is his chief aim. Oh, my husband, remember our own country! Think of the blood that has deluged her soil; of the noble, the brave, the free in heart who have had the traitor's doom awarded them for struggling to disinthral the land that gave them birth. You are a stranger—mingle not with the broils created by a discontented and intriguing spirit."

"Margaret, did you not yourself wish for a nobler career for me? Have you not urged me, often, to mingle among men, and use the gifts worthily, which nature has bestowed upon me?"

"I have, I still wish it; but not such a career as this. In place of soaring to your true elevation, you will be crushed, destroyed. You are deceived, Eustace. I have received a warning that I may

not lightly pass over. I have been told that he will use any means to gain your concurrence in his present views, for it is necessary to the success of his enterprise."

"And pray, Margaret, to whom are you indebted for such information."

"I do not feel at liberty to name the friend who so kindly interested himself in our fate, even to you. He is one who would save you from the snare you are blindly falling into; and I conjure you to listen to him. He feels friendship for both Col. Alwin and yourself; and although too honourable to betray what has only recently become known to him, he is convinced that all concerned in it must meet with disappointment, if no worse fate befal them; and he would save you from a participation in the punishment that must eventually overtake them."

"I thank him for his consideration," coldly replied Fitzgerald. "If, as I suspect, this information comes from Russell, he is going to act the traitor to his benefactor."

"Oh, do not thus misconstrue his motives. He wishes to save you, but not to injure Col. Alwin. He knows that the end of all this must be desolation, misery, possibly death!" and she wept bitterly.

It has always been admitted that tears are a woman's most efficient weapon, and they now produced a much greater effect than the earnest and impassioned words which had preceded them. Fitzgerald was softened to such a degree by the evident unhappiness of his wife, that if he could with honour have extricated himself from the dilemma in which he was placed, he would willingly have done so.

CHAPTER X.

Letter from Isabel to a young friend.

"Dear Emma:—Your last welcome letter found me, not, as you supposed, wearied to death with my summer retreat, but more in love with it than I can express. I have wished you here a thousand times, to share my happiness.

"Our host you have seen, and you know him to be one of Erin's noblest sons; but it is not of him, but his charming wife that I would write; a woman, my dear girl, whom to know is to love, admire, almost worship. To beauty, talent, and cultivation, she adds the deepest *fascination;* I can give no other name to the wonderful charm which surrounds her as with a halo. She and her lord appear to be perfectly happy in their mutual affection, and they have two noble looking children. Domestic happiness is here truly valued and enjoyed; what a pity it is that time will not stand still for those who so rightly employ it! I do not like to think that so charming a picture must be destroyed by this ruthless old monster. To-day we are surrounded by all that can make life desirable; blessed with youth, health, and keen relish for every enjoyment

which they impart; a few fleeting years roll by, and an old man with feeble steps and silvery hair mourns over the wreck of the past, perchance the survivor of all that once fastened the bonds of sympathy upon his heart. Such are thy triumphs, oh insatiable time! Thou stealest the bloom from the fairest cheek, life from the eye, and freshness from the heart. In thy iron grasp we vainly wrestle, for thy stern power crushes and destroys all things bright, beautiful, and beloved.

"Mercy! what a rhapsody I have been betrayed into. Pray excuse it, my dear friend, and I will compensate you for reading anything so tiresome, by relating an amusing conversation which took place last evening.

"I had a letter from our friend Caroline C., who is kind enough to enlighten me occasionally with bulletins from the seat of fashion. She informed me that the only colours worn by the *élite* are London smoke and the *Monkey's last gasp.* We suppose London smoke to be pretty near the colour of any other smoke, only a little dingier, perhaps; but as none of us had ever been present at the death of a monkey, we could not imagine what shade his last gasp could possibly be. I inquired of Zavala (you remember our Louisiana friend), and he answered with his usual sarcasm, that he did not know, but if we could get some one to give the *coup de grace* to the writer of the letter, and be near at the time, we should be able to judge. Mrs. Fitzgerald likes Caroline, and she quickly replied that there was a quicker method of arriving at the desired information, which would be to have the same office performed for him. The gentleman bowed with an air of pique, and walked off. She followed him, however, and in her winning way smoothed the ruffled plumage of his vanity, and soon brought him back in a good humour. Zavala has now been here several weeks, talking politics with my father, and looking love at Julie. She, insensible girl, appears as unconscious, and speaks as calmly as though no heart is quaffing destruction from her bright eyes. He must believe in the old adage, that "perseverance accomplishes all things," for it is now two years since he first devoted himself to her, and she is still indifferent. Never was any case more hopeless, and yet he will not see it. I who am a dispassionate observer, can understand the under current that moves the actors in the drama; but there is one here who ingeniously torments himself with the belief that she will be wooed and won from him. Poor Charles has monopolized her smiles until he cannot bear to see the faintest one bestowed upon another. He endeavours to conceal his jealousy, and sometimes succeeds so well that I have at times discovered a slight pallor usurp the rose-leaf tint on Julie's cheek, and a slight tremor in her voice, when she has witnessed his apparent willingness to give place to Zavala.

"We have a sort of madman here, who devotes himself to me. Russell became acquainted with him at Marietta, where some little skill in medicine possessed by Mr. Graham, enabled him to be of

essential service to Charles. He is my *beau ideal* of a young artist or poet: but alas! he is neither, and cannot bestow on me the immortality of Raphael's Fornarina, nor of Petrarch's Laura; but he can and does interest my feelings. There is evidently some concealed sorrow which preys on his mind, and at times jars a cord in his brain. My imagination is interested, yet do not suppose that my heart is in danger. That is too entirely devoted to my noble, my incomparable father, to have room in it for any of the romance of passion.

"I will describe to you a day here, and then you will have some idea of the pleasant life we lead.

"The early part of the morning is devoted to a canter on horseback or a sail on the river; then return to luncheon. When that is over, the gentlemen read aloud, while we employ ourselves with drawing or embroidery; then comes dinner, after which we are generally invisible until about sunset. Music and conversation fill up the winged hours until the witching hour of night!

"My father devotes the day to his own peculiar pursuits; but in the evening he always joins us, and relaxing from his high and dignified bearing, he becomes the most delightful companion you can imagine. Wit, eloquence, and knowledge, flow from his lips, and one is constantly surprised at the depth of thought or the sparkling satire which enriches his conversation. Oh, my dear Emma, how often have I thanked heaven for being the child of such a man! I would not barter my birthright for the proudest throne in Christendom.

"Adieu, dearest. I have written a volume, and only beg that you will send me one in return.

"ISABEL."

The first early days of autumn had arrived. It was one of those bright balmy mornings when the sunlight seems to dance over the green earth, and the soft air appears to impart new life to the frame. There was an elasticity in the atmosphere which rendered it a pleasure merely to inhale the pure air of heaven, and walk beneath its cloudless sky.

Little in unison with the loveliness of nature were the feelings of Zavala on that particular morning. The fear was ever on his heart, that Russell would discover the real position he held towards Miss de Bourg. The misunderstanding which existed between him and Julie contributed to keep up the belief of her actual betrothal in the mind of Russell; and she unconsciously confirmed all his suspicions, by the manner with which she received the attentions of Zavala. Piqued at his coldness, with a true woman's tact, she permitted Zavala to devote himself to her, in the belief that she had already been sufficiently explicit with him to destroy all hope of winning her hand; and Russell was by turns indignant and despairing. Col. Alwin was satisfied that Zavala was making great progress, and thought it best to allow his ward to remain in ignorance of the destiny he had awarded her.

On this bright morning, Zavala entered the drawing-room, and found Julie arranging some freshly-gathered flowers in a vase, while Russell and Isabel were promenading the portico in earnest conversation.

"Will you not walk, Miss de Bourg?" he inquired.

"No, thank you; I am very busy here, and I have been out all the morning with Mr. Graham, in search of plants he wishes for some medicinal purpose. Charles and Isabel appear to be enjoying the morning air."

Zavala glanced at them with a peculiar smile.

"Do you really believe the morning air induces them to promenade there, Miss de Bourg? Observe the earnest and impassioned air of Russell, and Miss Alwin too; is her complexion usually so fluctuating? Believe me, there is a deeper current of feeling there than you dream of."

Julie did look, and in spite of her struggle for self-control, she felt herself grow pale. To conceal her emotion, she took up a moss rose bud and admired its beauty, but Zavala was too well skilled in reading countenances to be deceived. He saw that the random shaft had told. He turned carelessly towards the vase, and taking from it a full blown rose, said—

"I am in a moralizing mood to-day, and even the flowers must furnish me with a subject. Behold this beautiful bud, sheltered in its green covering, with the faint pink just bursting through: 'tis an emblem of the inmost heart, folded in its own mantle of purity, tenderness, and reserve, before its slumbering passions and hidden energies have been called forth to desolate or bless the future."

"You grow poetic," said Julie, with a faint smile, for she felt it necessary to say something, when he paused.

"When gazing on a face and form that rival the creations of the most vivid fancy, can I be otherwise than poetic?"

Julie felt that another declaration was impending, and hurriedly exclaiming, "I cannot listen to such flattery," she escaped from the room.

Carefully securing the door of her apartment after her, she threw herself upon a seat, and buried her face in her hands.

"Jealous—jealous," she muttered, "and of my darling Isabel; my soul's sister. Oh, meanness most incomprehensible! what has this mad love made me stoop to! I will root it out. I will trample it in the dust, sooner than thus lose my self-respect!"

There she sat, the young, the proud, the beautiful, the high-hearted; she who had lived in an atmosphere of flattery until that mournful hour, self-humiliated, bowed beneath the weight of sorrow; her head rested on her hand, while its shining bands were loosened and falling around her, her quivering lips apart, and the heavy drops falling over her pale features. Julie de Bourg was not one to love lightly, and the years of her whole life had woven the spell which bound her to Russell. As children, they had been linked together

in bonds a thousand times more tender than those which unite the most affectionate brother and sister. This love, nurtured by time, and matured by intellect and enthusiasm, was now to be torn from her shrinking and agonized heart, while he transferred his devotion to Isabel. Ah, had it been any other one, she would have found the trial less severe; but to see her best-beloved friend arrayed against her as the rival possessor of the heart she valued, was bitterness indeed.

A violent headache excused her non-appearance at breakfast, and when Isabel came in to inquire about her sudden indisposition, she found her apparently enjoying a quiet slumber.

How often does a woman smile, and utter the light jest or warble the gay song, while under the excitement of wounded pride or outraged feeling! Julie knew that each turn of her countenance was watched by Zavala; and she kept so strict a watch over her feelings, that he almost doubted the success of his master-stroke of policy.

"I was surprised to hear of your sudden illness, Miss de Bourg," he said when she re-appeared, before the morning was over. "When you left the parlour you appeared quite well, and even more blooming than usual."

Julie replied with a degree of calmness which surprised herself.

"I am unused to walking before breakfast, and the exercise, combined with the perfume of the flowers I gathered, gave me a slight headache, which, I am happy to say, has quite left me."

"Nothing is more hurtful to the health than inhaling the perfume of flowers," said Col. Alwin. "Pray do not expose yourself to the chances of indisposition again, my dear; it is true, we have Mr. Graham here to aid us, but if you or Isabel should be seriously ill, so far from my friend Dr. Crawford, I should feel very unhappy about you."

"Thank you for your solicitude, dear Sir; I will endeavour to be as careful as possible."

Russell made no comment on her alleged indisposition, and left the room while they were speaking of it. Scarcely could Julie command her deeply tried feelings at this new proof of his indifference. Immediately afterwards, he came to the window, and requested Isabel to come out and walk with him.

"In a moment; Julie, won't you come with us?"

"No—thank you—I am afraid of the sun—my head is not quite right yet, though it no longer pains me."

"Ah—I forgot—you must take care of yourself to-day."

She threw on her bonnet and joined him, and they strolled along through a shady and secluded pathway which lay along the bank of the river. They walked some distance in utter silence, when Isabel pettishly exclaimed—

"I walked with you for your own pleasure, and yet you have never said a word. It is inexcusable to be so stupid, unless you are in love."

"I am—deeply, hopelessly," said Russell, almost fiercely.

"But not with me, fair sir, which is some comfort."

"Why a comfort?"

"Because, with that tragic face, I should expect you to enact something quite melo-dramatic when you were only informed that I could offer you no consolation. Pooh, Charles, you amaze me with your obtuseness. Love, certainly, has blinded you, or *I* should not be so much more keen-sighted towards the game that is playing before your eyes than you seem to be. Do not trust to Don Pedro's assertions, if he has made any. Believe me when I tell you, Julie has no love for him."

"Love! no—no—I never accused her of that; yet she will wed him, nevertheless, and I detest myself, that I cannot be as indifferent to her as she deserves."

"Now you know you are unjust to one you have known too long and well, to judge thus harshly. Never will Julie be won by one she loves not—never"——

"You are warm in the defence of your friend, young lady," said a strange voice at her elbow. "Oh, yes, you are warm in the defence of your friend, and you are right to trust her, for you are young and truthful yourself. Let me look upon you, for you are like one I saw in years that are gone—ay, as like as the budding rose is to the perfect flower; but she was blighted in her bright youth. I saw her, all radiant in beauty as she was, laid below the sod, and I laughed as I saw the sunbeams dancing upon her grave, for I knew they could not penetrate the earth and give warmth and vitality to the heart beneath. Yet she had never injured me; I had hurled the thunderbolt at her; I had given the death-stroke to her gentle heart."

"The two listened in astonishment to this strange address: the person who uttered it was a woman in the decline of life; her figure was tall and commanding, though her dress denoted extreme poverty. Her face still retained marks of beauty of a stern and haughty character, and there was a degree of wildness in her large dark eyes, which denoted partial insanity. After surveying the two attentively, she said:

"A bright and merry morning to you both. You, my pretty lady, look as blithe and happy as the birds on the bough."

"What do you wish, good woman?" inquired Isabel, slightly startled at her abrupt address.

"Wish—oh, let me see; I wish to see one—but you must not know who it is: for he would curse me bitterly. Won't you have your fortune told, young lady? May the weird be better than thy mother's!"

"My mother! oh, did you really know her?" she quickly asked.

"Know her—yes, and you are as like her as any two stars in the sky resemble each other. Come, give me your hand, pretty one, and let me read you a destiny that should be as bright as the world

ever saw, to repay you for the unmerited sufferings of your angel mother."

"What could have caused her to suffer?" said Isabel.

"Ah, you are at that, are you? I won't tell, for he would kill me—he said he would if I ever betrayed him. Give me your hand and hear your destiny."

Isabel held out her hand, and the woman gazed long on each slender finger; then carefully examining the lines, she sighed deeply.

"So young, and so doomed!" she muttered. "Lady, your fate is written in dark characters, and I would fain be excused reading them."

Isabel half smiled.

"Tell all you see, good woman. I am not superstitious, and I do not fear the darkest prediction you can make concerning my future destiny."

"Do not speak thus," said the fortune-teller, shaking her head. "'Tis a dreary page, traced in disappointment and ending in despair."

"Allow me at least the consolation of hope," said the incredulous girl. "Charles, pray be my banker—yet stop—let us hear your fortune first. I hope the sybil will be more propitious to you than she proved to me."

With a smile, he held forth his hand, but the woman appeared more interested in scanning his features. Her eagle gaze was bent on him many moments, while she muttered:

"Yes, it must be so. The broad, high brow, the flashing eye, the haughty lip, all her own. Her noble spirit is here too, or I am much mistaken. Young man, what name do you bear?"

"Charles Russell."

"Ay, I thought so. Now, I will read your fate, son of the noble in heart. There—let me see—a lover without a lady love—crosses and vexations in early life, followed by a noon of fame and happiness won, as all good gifts should be, by truth and incorruptible integrity Remember this warning; dream not of her (pointing to Isabel); if you have done so, forget it; 'tis easy to crush a passion in the bud; if you heed not my words, you are lost."

She was moving away, but Russell stopped her.

"I must reward you for the fine fortune you have predicted for me. Here; let me cross your hand with silver."

She took the offered coin, and weighing it in her fingers, said—

"It is far more than the words were worth; but of what value is it to me when I am starving, and can get no food hereabouts for money! I have eaten nothing since yesterday at noon."

"Poor creature!" exclaimed Isabel. "Come with me, and I will feed you."

"Bless you for that, although you are *his* child."

They hurried back to the house, and the fortune-teller was soon seated on the steps, voraciously devouring the food which Miss

Alwin had procured for her. She refused to enter the house, and muttered some unintelligible words about a vow never to enter beneath the roof that sheltered some one, until she had obtained vengeance for a wrong that had been inflicted on her.

When she finished eating, she arose to go. At that moment Col. Alwin came out, and in some surprise inquired—

"Whom have you here, Isabel?—a beggar."

As she was about to reply, the woman raised her bonnet and pushed it back, leaving the grey hair and strongly marked features in full view. She slowly replaced it, but one glance at the flashing face before him seemed to freeze every drop of blood in his veins. There was scorn, mockery, insult, and defiance, mingled with the wild glare of insanity, in the expression which gleamed from those worn and faded features. Col. Alwin stood gazing on her with that look of aversion and horror with which a man might regard the spectre of the detested dead, which suddenly arose in the path before him. She laughed scornfully, and said—

"Your evil genius has appeared again, Alwin, and you know that disappointment and sorrow to you ever track her steps. You thought me dead, no doubt, but you see I am here to——"

"Wretch—fiend," muttered he between his closed teeth, "say but another word *here*, and you will find that my threats can be fulfilled. Await me there," pointing, as he spoke, to a grove, a short distance from the house.

The concentrated passion and determination expressed in his tone and manner, seemed to terrify the woman into obedience, for she turned away without another word, and walked towards the spot he indicated.

As Col. Alwin watched her receding form, his dark and stormy features worked with feelings to which his alarmed and astonished daughter could gain no clue. As the stranger was lost to view, he struck his hand violently upon his brow and sank on a seat, his whole frame convulsed with the emotion he vainly endeavoured to conceal.

Without the power of moving or uttering a word, Isabel had leaned against the wall, a witness to this strange scene. At length her father spoke in a tone which powerful self-command had rendered calm.

"Go to your room, my daughter, and forget, if you can, the scene you have just witnessed. I charge you, as you value my peace, never to mention what you have just seen and heard."

She obeyed in silence, and in a few moments afterwards, from the windows of her room, she saw him take the pathway which led to the grove.

CHAPTER XI.

As Col. Alwin entered the woodland, the woman advanced to meet him. He impatiently waved her back—

"No nearer—no nearer—tell me what you want, and why you have sought me."

"I want revenge, *revenge*," was the startling response, shrieked forth in a tone that well might turn the warm blood to ice. "I have prayed for it—I have wept for it; yet still it is denied—you flourish—you are happy, while I am a wretched outcast from hope and sympathy. Oh, would that I were not a woman, or that a demon's hate could nerve my woman's hand to bathe itself in the life-blood of your false and cruel heart; then I should not vainly thirst for long delayed vengeance."

"Impotent, silly wretch! what would you with me? I came here to learn your wants, and relieve them, not to listen to the wild ravings of insanity."

"Who made me mad, and now taunts me with it? Who deluged my brain with a sea of blood until fire sprang from the red waves and withered my soul? Who did this, hard, unfeeling, unrelenting man? I can but curse you and die, but my curse shall fall and crush you, when the lips that uttered it are closed for ever."

"Come, Theresa, no more nonsense, if you please. I am tired of these tragedy-queen airs. Are you in want of money, that I find you in this wretched condition? I have told you always to apply to me when in need of anything. Tell me briefly what has brought you hither?"

"Not the desire of money, Alwin," she replied, with more quietness of manner. "If I took your gold and bought food and raiment with it, the one would choke, and the other would not warm me. I come to tell you once again of my interminable hatred: to predict to you the end of all your fine schemes. The future has been opened to me, and I come to you with its revelations. Listen to my words, for my lips are touched with the prophet's holy fire, and I have been commissioned to reveal your fate to you. Your race is nearly run—a few more months and prison-walls will bound your falcon glance; you will issue from them a fallen man. The wages of ambition are a seared heart and a blasted conscience; but you shall not have these alone. The vulture of disappointment shall gnaw your very heart-strings, and the solitary spot in your callous soul which is hallowed by affection shall be laid desolate. You are a hard and unfeeling man; the stain of blood is on your hand, and it cries aloud for vengeance. The recollection of the trusting heart you deceived, of the bosom you wrung with anguish, is on your conscience."

Col. Alwin listened to these denunciations with such an expression of indifference on his saturnine countenance, that apparently exasperated at his calmness, the woman again resumed—

"Your course has been marked with desolation and ruin; your presence, like the fatal sirocco, has carried destruction with it. But mark my words—the decree has gone forth; you may struggle against it, but its fulfilment is inevitable. You shall live to weep over your former high estate—to rend your gray hairs with anguish.

Not only shall the rewards of ambition be torn from your grasp, but the last hope of your heart, the idol of your pride and your affections, shall fade from your side. All—all shall perish in a few brief years: when that hour comes, think of me—remember that the voice of her you have cursed and reviled as if no spirit of humanity dwelt in her form, pronounced your doom."

Col. Alwin had quite recovered his usual self-possession, for his was not a spirit to quail before the mysterious denunciations of a maniac. He had listened to this torrent of words without the power of stopping the speaker; but taking advantage of the first pause, he said—

"That is quite enough, Theresa. We will no longer discuss those supernatural revelations, if you please. Take this purse, and when its contents are exhausted you shall have another supply."

"Never, never; *I* touch your gold! I would sooner beg my bread from door to door, or lie down in the road and die of hunger, than take it. Farewell, Sir; when we next meet, you will know if I am a true or false prophet."

She turned away, and went with rapid strides through the wood, chanting a wild song, in a loud, unmelodious tone.

"Crazy fool!" muttered Col. Alwin, as he retraced his steps towards the house. "I cannot imagine how she discovered me here. That woman is the torment of my life; and spite of all my efforts, I cannot see her without betraying the agony it causes me to recal the transactions of my early life in which she was interested."

CHAPTER XII.

On the morning after the fortune-teller's visit, the gentlemen had all separated on various expeditions of business or pleasure, and Isabel proposed a sail on the river, with the Corporal to manage the boat. Julie assented, and Mrs. Fitzgerald was persuaded to acompany them.

Since morning the wind had risen considerably, and the waves were breaking in foamy billows upon the shore. Many would have feared to venture on them on such a day; but the lady of the island was one whose intrepid spirit was not easily daunted, and she laughed at the hesitation of her young companions, when they observed these indications. She was accustomed to brave the waves, and had grown bold from never having encountered an accident. They were soon comfortably seated in the boat, and in the excitement of dancing over the unquiet waters in their fairy bark, they forgot all apprehensions of danger.

Late rains had swollen the Ohio much beyond its usual height, and many trees, with their leafy honours yet unshed, were prostrate in the stream, their roots still clinging to the soil from which the rushing waters had torn them. Large masses of drift wood were floating

lazily along with the current, and it required some skill in the Corporal to steer clear of them.

To the eyes of our little party the scene was enchanting. On one side were abrupt hills rising from the river's brink, wooded to their summits, and exhibiting the brilliant variety of tints seen in an autumnal forest in America, before the leaves have begun to fall. On the other side was the beautiful island they had left, with its white buildings seen through the opening boughs of the trees, the only evidence that the footsteps of civilized man had ever trodden the soil of the deep forest which cast its solemn shadows upon the waters they were gliding over. Occasionally the warble of a bird would break the silence which reigned around; for our fair party were too deeply absorbed in their own fancies to keep up anything like a connected conversation. At length, Mrs. Fitzgerald called the attention of Isabel to a tall figure which stood on the shore, leaning carelessly upon a rifle.

"Look at your dusky admirer, Isabel. One might almost believe him a student of the graces, who had placed himself there purposely to have his attitude admired."

Isabel looked in the direction indicated, and beheld the Indian chief Outalassa; his attitude was strikingly imposing, and he formed quite an appropriate figure in the wild scene before them. The chief was a tall, powerfully made man, with an eye of fire and a lip of pride. His blanket, which was of bright crimson and green, skilfully contrasted, hung partly off one shoulder, and fell in graceful folds around his fine person; he appeared to be watching the motions of the boat with absorbing interest, and after a few moments, motioned to the Corporal to approach the shore.

Outalassa was in the habit of visiting Mr. Fitzgerald's family, frequently, and especially of late they had become quite familiar with his presence. The Corporal obeyed the signal, and as they came within hailing distance, he said, as he pointed upwards—

"The storm-cloud is gathering fast. In less than twenty minutes the wind will rush around yon point so heavily, that your boat will be upset, and the daughters of the pale face will find a grave in the depths of the dark waters. Put back, old man, for the storm spirit is unfurling his banner over the sky, and you should, before this, have taken warning from his signals."

Thus warned, they looked up and saw that many dark clouds were rapidly gathering overhead, though the sun still shone brightly. Hastily thanking the chief, the Corporal was instantly commanded to tack and cross in the direction of the island.

Alarmed at the danger, the negro lost his presence of mind, and steered wildly, while the wind increased every moment. Outalassa did not appear to desire to part from them so suddenly: he walked along the edge of the bank, keeping his eye on the boat, and after the lapse of a few seconds, he shouted—

"Come to, old man, and let me help to manage that boat, or you will never reach your home in safety."

The alarmed occupants immediately ordered the Corporal to steer to the shore and let them get out and encounter the coming storm on land sooner than endanger life by remaining in the boat. The black made an effort to obey, but the wind by this time had become so high, that the craft was quite unmanageable. It was necessary to lower the sail to prevent it from being capsized; and to their great dismay, they found that the oars had been forgotten. Left utterly at the mercy of the winds and waves, the light craft tossed from billow to billow, threatening at every plunge to engulf them in their dark bosom, while a torrent of rain began to descend.

Soon after the extent of their danger became known, the chief disappeared. Isabel wrung her hands, wept, and deplored their situation; while Julie, pale and cold, passed one arm around her friend, and concealed her face upon her shoulder, murmuring—

"We can at least die together."

Mrs. Fitzgerald had not lost all hope. With the want of courage characteristic of his race, the negro was shivering with terror, totally incapable of exerting himself. He clasped his hands fervently, and commenced summing up all his transgressions in a manner which, in a situation of less peril, would have had a most ludicrous effect. "Oh, good Mr. Lordy Goddy, be merciful to me and I will tell no more lies. Let me get out o' dis scrape wid dese dear innocent lambs, and I will nebber dance the double shuffle no more."

Then suddenly recollecting a prayer which had been taught to him in his childhood, he kneeled down with some difficulty, and grasping both sides of the boat convulsively, he commenced—

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray de Lord——."

His invocation was cut short by a loud shout which came through the pauses in the storm, and they knew that help was near. The Corporal started up at the imminent risk of upsetting the boat, and exclaimed—

"Here dey come, oh Lordy, and I'll be sure to keep my word 'bout de lies—leastways, I'll try; but the double shuffle I'm not so sartin 'bout, case *dat's* my great 'complishment' 'mong de darkies. Here be that good Mr. Injun, and Mr. Russell too."

At the same moment Isabel spoke.

"Raise your head, Julie; here is Charles coming to rescue us."

Julie looked up and saw Russell and Outalassa within a short distance of them, in a much larger boat than the one they occupied.

A rope was thrown to the Corporal, and in another moment they were alongside of each other.

"Dear—dear Charles!" exclaimed Isabel, "your arrival is indeed opportune."

"Yes, thank heaven! we are in time," he hurriedly replied. Outalassa, assist me with these ladies."

He raised Isabel in his arms, and placed her in safety in the other boat; when he turned again, he found the Chief supporting the fainting form of Julie.

"It is only terror," said Mrs. Fitzgerald, wringing the water from the heavy tresses of the insensible girl. "See, she revives already."

They escaped; but there was one who sat beside the social hearth that night, a desolate creature, and if she alone could have met that fate, she could have wished that the adventure of the morning had closed her life. It is dreadful for the young heart to despair; and there was such a cold heavy weight pressing on that of Julie, that she fancied it could never again feel the buoyant spring of joy.

The events of the morning had brought the conviction coldly to her heart, that she had indeed been rivalled by her friend, or in the moment of danger would not Russell's first thought have been of her? Yet, her lip was smiling and her eye bright.

"He shall never know the depth of my wretchedness," she mentally exclaimed. "I can die, but I cannot suffer him to suspect how truly I have loved him."

She saw her fairy temple of happiness, around which she had thrown a spell tinted with the rich colouring of a young and ardent fancy, vanish like frostwork before the beams of the morning sun. The links that bound her to life had been wreathed with roses, and hitherto she had not dreamed of the thorns which lay concealed beneath them; now they were piercing her heart, but she silently endured the suffering. Zavala watched her with unceasing interest, and his penetration enabled him to read much of what passed in her mind. This fitful gaiety was unlike her usual manner, and he hoped that jealousy had driven deep its envenomed fang at last, for only through wounded pride could he hope to succeed in winning a hearing for his own suit.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Do you not fear this savage who wanders so often around you?" inquired Graham of Isabel. "In all my walks I encounter him; and when near you, he lays aside his constitutional indolence, and is ever on the alert to perform some service for you."

"Fear him? Oh no; I can never forget that but for him we should have found a watery grave. It was he who informed Charles of our peril, and assisted him to rescue us on the day of the storm. I cannot be so ungrateful as to fear him."

Graham was silenced, but not convinced. He had read the heart of the Chief with an eye quickened by the deep interest with which Miss Alwin had inspired him. Of a strange, wayward, and melancholy turn of mind, it was seldom he met with the sympathy his spirit craved. Little congeniality would the casual observer have remarked between the pale, reserved student, and the happy, light-hearted Isabel, the idol of many hearts, and the privileged

darling of the circle in which she lived. But her gaiety was only as the flashing of the sunbeam on the waters, beneath which flowed a current of deep and earnest sympathy, which could pour into that lucrative spirit the balm it sorely needed. She listened to his wild dreams—his half revealed sorrows, with an interest they seldom excited, and endeavoured to bring back his mind to a healthy tone, by leading him gradually to look upon the brighter side of life. When with her, the spell of peace was on his heart; but when her voice ceased to float around him, the brightness was gone, and the dark hour was again on him.

Who or what he was, no one knew, except from occasional remarks which escaped him; and at times his language was so wild, his expressions of remorse so startling, that but for his extreme youth, one might have deemed him the perpetrator of some dark crime. He spent his days in wandering over the island, or in deep study. Isabel was the frequent companion of his rambles; and often did she regret the withering melancholy which preyed upon his mind and destroyed his health. Gleams of a brilliant intellect and highly cultivated mind, would frequently break from the cloud of misanthropy which enveloped him; flashes of brightness as transient and fitful as summer lightning.

They had wandered forth to a favourite spot of his—a dark dell overhung with the drooping branches of the graceful willow. A rustic seat was placed beneath its shadow, and as the branches swayed aside, glimpses of the bright sunlight flashed on the waters of a little rivulet which wound its way to the Ohio.

"I like this spot," said Graham, "because it reminds me of my early home. This fairy glen is like the place in which I once played at my mother's feet. The associations of childhood weave a chain around the heart which is never broken; the home of youth is remembered through all after years, as the brightest spot in the world's wide waste."

"It is right and natural that it should be," replied Isabel. "There the free and joyous hours of infancy were passed; there a mother's unutterable love first breathed its hallowed influence on the heart."

"And there, too," interrupted Graham, with some bitterness, "there the smiles and sunshine of childhood were gradually merged in the cares of opening life, and the aspirations and hopes of the unworn heart pointed to a futurity of unclouded joy, vainly expecting that Destiny would turn from her everlasting course and bestow blessings on ourselves, while she is known to shower curses on others. 'Tis true, a fear will sometimes cast a chill over the unbroken spirit, an omen of the desolation that *must* fall on all earth's creatures, but it is quickly cast aside, and, like spots on the sun, is not heeded amid the radiance that surrounds it. But pardon me, Miss Alwin, my gloom saddens you. Is not this spot beautiful to-day?"

"It is lovely; but too gloomy to be the favourite haunt of one so

given to dark thoughts as you are. If the past is sombre, strive to forget it."

"Forget! ah, forgetfulness is for all but me. The curse of remembrance clings to my soul, and at times maddens me. In the delirium of suffering I have asked for a Lethean draught, but in vain. I am unlike the rest of the world; for with them the great lesson of life is forgetfulness, while for me there is no oblivion but the grave. To-day the lover bends in agony over the dust of her who had been the divinity of his existence, and to-morrow we find him wearing the wreath of joy, and seeking in a bright or more youthful form, consolation for his loss. My punishment is to *remember*."

He buried his face in his hands, and remained some moments absorbed in painful thought. When he again spoke, it was in a less excited manner.

"I was speaking to you of the beauty of this, my favourite haunt. To me it is not dark; brightness is not all excluded; look at the fitful glimmer of the sun through these drooping tendrils. I sit there and moralize as the changing light falls on me, and is then obscured. It is like hope, for when the light is shadowed we know that there is brightness beyond. Ah! life is but a weary mockery. We pour forth our best and purest feelings, a rich libation on the altar of the cold and hollow world, and weep over the treachery and disappointment it yields us in return. Each heart has its own fond dream which is *never* realized. Ask the pale student as he bends over his books in earnest thought, if they have brought contentment, and he will tell you they are the means of forgetfulness; in their mystic pages he can wrap his soul, and take from it the spell of the past. Ask the statesman, in his career of pride, and he will tell you that his first dream was not of ambition. Ask the poet, and he will pour the passion of his soul over the broken idols of his youth, in numbers coined from the anguish of a breaking heart and an overwrought brain. Ah, what is there worth living for after the blight has fallen on the brightest and dearest hopes of youth!"

"Much, much, believe me. The noblest spirits are those which have sprung, phœnix-like, from the ashes of their early hopes. Cast aside the shadows that would gather over your mind and dim its early brightness. Life was not given us to spend in vain repinings. Create for yourself a future."

He shook his head.

"'Tis not the future which looms up darkly, but the unforgotten past. For me there can be no future in this world; a few brief and fleeting months, and my course will be run. Look," and he held up his emaciated hand, "I have no visible disease, but the fever is *here*," pointing to his heart. "I am calm to-day; without betraying emotion, I can speak of my approaching fate to you, who are the only being on earth who will think my memory worthy of a sigh. Oh, Miss Alwin, in your future life, when surrounded by

the atmosphere of affection, when all fling blessings on your path, suffer your thoughts sometimes to revisit the lonely grave of the wanderer. Then, remember that the only light which gleamed on his solitary pathway, as it descended into the dark valley, was your kindness—your compassion."

"You are melancholy to-day," said Isabel, scarcely able to repress her tears, as she looked on the pale features and wasted form of the young student. From what source his sorrows sprang she knew not; but she saw they were real, for they were wearing him away by degrees, and each hour bringing him to the grave he seemed to covet.

"Let us leave this spot; it oppresses me," she said.

As they arose to go, a rustling among the bushes attracted their attention, and the figure of the Indian chief, in full costume, stood before them. He wore a robe of dressed deer-skin, ornamented with fringes of the same, and with grotesque figures wrought in beads. Down the front, and over the shoulders, hung a fringe of hair of different shades taken from the scalps he had won in battle. There were the gray locks of the aged, the long and glittering tresses of women, and the silken curls of childhood; a sad proof of his title to be called a Brave. On his head was a superb circlet of white and scarlet plumes; and in his belt, in place of the tomahawk, was a richly mounted dagger, a present from his friend, the chief of the Pale Faces, as he called Col. Alwin. He appeared surprised to find the dell thus tenanted.

"Will the Glancing Eyes, and he of the gloomy brow, tell me where my brother, the chief of the Pale Faces, is? He was to meet me in the Fairy Glen, when the sun cast a lengthened shadow on the earth."

Before they could reply, Col. Alwin descended the pathway leading to their retreat.

"I was not aware that this was a haunt of yours," he said, as he glanced at his daughter and her companion. "Do not let me disturb you. Come, Outalassa, we will seek some other spot in which to hold our conference."

The Indian obeyed; but scarcely had their retreating footsteps died away, when the branches again parted, and a figure of greater interest emerged from them. It was that of a young Indian girl, and a fine specimen of her race she was; tall, light, and gracefully formed, she looked the goddess of her native wilds. Her features were of remarkable symmetry, and even had they been less beautiful, her magnificent dark eyes would have given a sprightliness and animation to her countenance preferable to mere beauty of outline. Strings of coloured beads were woven in the braids of her long hair, and wound around her head. Large silver rings hung in her ears, and her neck was covered with beads and chains, some of them of valuable workmanship. A calico robe of gorgeous colours was

fastened at the waist with a richly wrought wampum belt; and moccasins, embroidered with beads, covered her delicate feet.

"Innohae!" exclaimed Isabel. "What has brought you hither?" The Indian placed her finger on her lips, and bent her head to catch the last lingering echo of the retreating footsteps, before she replied. She then approached, and seated herself at the feet of Isabel, and fixed her dark eyes upon her with an expression of deep melancholy. Innohae was the daughter of a chief belonging to the remnant of one of the peaceful tribes of New York. She had been partially educated at a boarding school for young ladies, but on her emancipation from civilized life, she had returned with delight to the wandering habits of her people. The band of her father emigrated to the West, and united themselves with the tribe of which Outalassa was chief, and they wished to cement the union by giving the young Innohae to him for a wife. She had been a frequent visitor at the island during the summer, and her mysterious appearance to-day filled Isabel with a vague feeling of alarm.

"Why do you gaze upon me thus?" she inquired of the Indian girl.

"Because you are beautiful. The light of the glancing eyes dims the loveliness of the daughters of my race. Lady, your shadow falls cold on my heart, for it is between me and the Eagle of my tribe. You are, indeed, beautiful, but you are not suited to the wild wood. You could never fulfil the duties of the squaw. Look," and she took the fair hand of Isabel and placed it beside her own dusky, though not less gracefully formed one.

Isabel smiled.

"I shall never have those duties to perform. The daughters of my race are too delicately nurtured to bear the same exposure as their Indian sisters. Tell me, Innohae, do you prefer the wild wood to the comfortable dwelling?"

"Prefer it!" said the girl in a low quick tone. "Who would not rather lie down on the green earth, with the bright eyes of the Great Spirit looking out from their clear blue home; with the free air of heaven murmuring around them, than be shut up in brick walls with the solitary chirp of the cricket, in exchange for the untold melodies of nature? No; give me the forest depths, with the fresh earth beneath my tread, and a bright sky above me; then my heart bounds as free as the happy waters leap and glitter in the sunshine. Shut me up in your houses and I droop—I die. My heart thirsts for the bright earth and the gushing rill. Oh! what is your life of form and ceremonies when compared with the wild pleasures of mine!"

Isabel regarded the animated face before her with an admiring eye; but even as she gazed, the flush of excitement vanished; the girl's countenance returned to its usual state of immobility; and she sat with her arms folded on her bosom, as motionless as a statue.

"I am almost tempted to try your wild life, Innohae, since you

are so eloquent in its praise. Will you welcome me as a sister in your forest home?"

"The Great Spirit forbid, lady, that such as you are should dwell among my people! There would then be no more room in their hearts for the poor Indian maiden; the Glancing Eyes would fill them with her bright magic, and her silvery tones would become the music most dear to their ears. They have already wiled from the Dove of the weekwam the affections of him in whose presence she alone exists. Yes, *he* loves you, lady, and I bid you beware."

Suddenly starting to her feet, she raised her finger in a warning manner, and continued—

"I must leave you now, but remember my caution. Go not forth alone, for danger lurks in your pathway."

Before the surprised Isabel could speak, the girl had glided away, and vanished among the trees.

"What can she mean?" said Isabel, turning her bewildered face towards Graham.

"Just what I have suspected for some time. The chief loves you, and will carry you off, if other means of obtaining you fail."

"Oh, that idea is too absurd," said she, laughing. "Savage as he is, he cannot be quite destitute of common sense. However, let us go. After such a solemn warning, I suppose I had better quit my vagrant wanderings."

They met Col. Alwin and Outalassa, and there was an angry spot on the brow of the former, and an air of defiance on the countenance of the Indian, which did not bode a long continuance of the amicable relations which had lately existed between them.

Outalassa was a powerful chief. Besides his own tribe, he possessed great influence with several neighbouring ones, with which he was in alliance. Col. Alwin was exceedingly desirous to enlist him in his meditated enterprise; and the wily savage, seeing this anxiety to obtain his concurrence, overrated his own consequence, and imagined his assistance would be secured at any price. He had seen Isabel Alwin, and loved her with a vehemence of passion known only to the untamed nature of man in its uncultivated state. Ignorant of the wide gulf which refinement and education placed between them, there was, to his untutored mind, nothing ridiculous in the idea of one great chief bestowing his daughter in marriage on another.

He was quite ready to stipulate, that she should never be put to the employment of hoeing corn or preparing his food, and he did not know what more her father could require of his daughter's husband. She should only amuse his idle hours, and work wampum belts; and with the characteristic indolence of a savage, he thought that a sufficient bribe to win the young lady's consent.

"I will never beat her," thought he; "and if she wishes it, she shall have a big house, for there are trees enough in my hunting grounds to build one."

Great was his indignation and astonishment to find his proposal received by Col. Alwin with incredulity, and when convinced of his seriousness, rejected with ill-concealed contempt.

CHAPTER XIV.

The voice of music came sweetly to the ear; a proud, yet a mournful strain. It was one of Ireland's national melodies, which Mrs. Fitzgerald was performing with that brilliancy of execution and deep feeling, which seem almost like inspiration.

Hers was one of those rare voices which unite great compass with tones of the softest melody; and her expressive countenance, now flashing with enthusiasm as the strain swelled high and loud, now sad and subdued as Erin's woes formed the theme of her song, wore in its turn the impress of each feeling the music awakened in her heart.

What thrilling associations can a once familiar strain call up from the buried memories of the past! Strong is the spell a few magical notes can cast upon the soul, recalling the boundless spirit of joy, or the surging anguish of despair.

Strain after strain succeeded each other; and oppressed with many painful feelings, Julie de Bourg glided from the room, taking refuge in the garden. She sought the shelter of a summer-house, and wept without restraint. Her self-control had at last failed her, and her sorrow overflowed in tears.

Suddenly, a cold hand was laid on hers, and starting up, she beheld Russell; his proud and lofty features wearing an expression of mournful interest, which thrilled her heart.

"Julie, forgive me for intruding on you at such a moment. I was sent to seek you. I heard your convulsive weeping. I involuntarily witnessed your emotion. What cause can you have for such sorrow as this? Let me once more be your brother, your counsellor. Why, dear Julie, is your heart sad, in the midst of mirth? Alas! I thought my own the only one on which a shadow had fallen."

Julie arose and said,—

"We will return to the house. My sorrows can be of little consequence to one who has been so cold, so careless as you have lately been to me."

"Cold!" repeated Russell, in a voice of deep emotion. "Thus are we ever judged; how erringly, how falsely, only the heart can feel. Yet, why should I complain that the betrothed of another judges me harshly?"

"I am at a loss to understand your meaning, Mr. Russell," said Julie; with an accent of slight disdain.

"And yet I think it is obvious enough," he impetuously replied. "You have once deceived me, Miss de Bourg; how bitterly, how deeply, is known alone to Heaven and myself. Seek not again to

arouse those feelings which have cost me such suffering to discipline to resignation. Zavala calls me friend—and I do not wish to play the traitor towards him."

"You still speak in riddles. What is Don Pedro to me, that you thus couple my name with his? Has he dared to claim a deeper interest in me than friendship warrants? How—oh, how has he wrought on you, who have known me from childhood, to believe that I can deceive? Oh, Charles, is this just? Is it like yourself?"

"Are you not then his betrothed bride? Have you not been pledged to him since our first arrival here?"

"Never! *His* bride: sooner that of death."

"Then I have been greatly deceived. Blinded by my own passion, I have been his unsuspecting dupe. Julie, I cannot longer conceal the truth. I have been unwilling to drag you from brighter prospects, to the lowly destiny I can offer you; but I can struggle no longer against my own emotions. I love you deeply—sincerely. Answer me in one word—hope, or despair."

We do not record the answer of the lady. Long and earnest was the conversation which ensued, and when the two returned to the house, there was a triumphant flush on the brow of Russell, while the dark clear eyes of Miss de Bourg had a softer and less troubled expression in their depths than lately dwelt there. No comments were made on their prolonged absence, though Zavala looked unutterable things, as he marked the abstracted air of his lady love.

The two girls no sooner found themselves alone, in their own apartment, than Julie threw herself on the bosom of Isabel, and informed her of the explanation which had at last taken place.

"The game is played out at last," she replied with a caress. "I have looked on in astonishment, to see two persons who have known each other through life, as you and Charles have, thus ingeniously tormenting yourselves. Tell me all about it, dearest; why have you been so cold to each other of late? Was it only a lover's quarrel?"

"No, not that exactly, for until this evening we were not declared lovers. The misrepresentations of Don Pedro have caused the whole misunderstanding. It appears to me that the avowal was wrung from Charles, more through inability to conceal his feelings, than with the wish to woo and win me. He spoke of his uncertain prospects—of his way yet to make in this busy, calculating world, and lamented that he must take me from my present position, to become the partner of his humble home. Oh, Isabel, I did not dare to tell him how much brighter such a fate will be to me, than the enjoyment of all the vanities that wealth can purchase, if unshared by him. What is outward show when compared with the deep and trusting affection which can hallow the hearth of domestic love? Then he spoke of his ambition—his hopes of future fame—his deep desire to become distinguished. How quickly my thoughts took the line of his, and the future glowed with the brightness of untried hopes Oh, dearest, I am too happy. If you could have seen the struggles of

feeling which have wrung my heart—the deep and abiding sense o wretchedness, when I thought myself neglected and forsaken, you would indeed rejoice with me that this terrible state of mind is at last ended."

"I do rejoice, my dear Julie—you have my fullest sympathy and approbation. I ask no brighter destiny for the friend of my heart, than to be united to Charles Russell. He is noble and honourable: gifted with all the gentler affections which give a charm to every-day life."

There was a long pause. Julie was standing before the mirror, eaning forward with her head supported by her hand, her hair loosened and falling in shining waves around her graceful neck. Beautiful indeed she looked, with that placid smile on her chiselled lip, and the brilliant flush of happiness upon her cheek. Enjoy hose visions of hope, fair dreamer, for soon will the misty veil which conceals the dark sorrows menacing thee be torn away, and the future revealed in all its naked reality!

She at length turned an inquiring eye on her companion, and asked—

"Did you never think, Isabel, that Charles might love you?"

"Only as a sister. I have long been aware of his affection for you, and his honourable struggles against it. Love is indeed blind, or you could not have fancied such a thing."

"But on the day of the storm," persisted Julie, "he might have exhibited more feeling, I then thought; when he passed me by at such a moment, to ensure the safety of another first, the revulsion of feeling overcame me, and I fainted. It was not terror—I could have died with firmness, I think; the pang of death can never equal what I felt at that moment. Oh, Isabel, my sufferings were terrible that night, for I believed you to be my rival."

"Silly girl," said Isabel, imprinting a kiss on her cheek, "How could you fancy such a thing? Charles is my brother, my friend. His coldness proceeded from the belief that you were the betrothed of another, and he had no right to manifest the interest he too deeply felt. A rival to no woman shall I be, for one love fills my heart to the exclusion of all others. My affection for my father is strong as death, and lasting as my life. How can I ever place another in competition with him, the noble, the eloquent, the peerless? His equal I can never find. To others he may not be all this, for who can appreciate those lightning gleams of genius as I, his child, his companion, can? No—no—there is no other gifted like him, with an intellect which gives a glory and a beauty to everything it flashes on; with the rich and varied stores of the learning of other lands, the poetry of other climes. What wonder is it that I love him with a passionate idolatry too deep, too holy for words to express!"

Who that had seen that fair and gentle girl in the ordinary intercourse of life, would have dreamed that such intense feeling lay beneath the brilliant surface of her character? Few would have

deemed her capable of so ennobling an affection, for the world judges us not as we are, but as it sees us; and enthusiasm of feeling is declared by the voice of the multitude, to be ridiculous, however deep or holy the source from which it springs.

CHAPTER XV.

The dove of peace had at last folded her wings over the soul of Russell, and all was calm within it as the slumber of an infant's heart. The bright dream of his life was realized: the coveted treasure was his; and he hailed his success in love, as an omen of the more dazzling meed ambition was to win.

There are few hearts that can love with that high and ennobling affection which alone deserves the name. The enthusiasm of passion cannot be felt by a cold nature, nor an unintellectual one; and this conviction it was, which caused one of the most gifted of women to exclaim, "Jamais je n'ai été aimée comme j'aime." Such finely-tuned natures find no such sympathy as they can bestow.

Bright fires burned throughout the house, for the morning was cold and stormy. Heavy clouds lay piled upon the horizon, and the fitful gusts of wind brought the rain in dashes against the window panes. Julie stood alone in the library, watching the fluttering leaves as they were whirled from their airy homes, and scattered by the blast. The glad and happy heart which beat within her breast had no sympathy with the wild revels of nature on that particular morning, and she sang a sweet strain which chimed in with the raving of the winds, though she was at the moment quite unconscious of the harmony between them. The low melody, scarcely trilled above a whisper, was merely the music of her soul, finding unconscious utterance in sound.

Russell entered and stood some moments gazing on the lovely face, half turned from him, with all the ardent admiration of a lover.

"Once more, dear Julie—repeat once more that sweetest of all melodies," he whispered.

Julie turned to him with a bright smile—

"We had much better use the few moments we shall be allowed to stay alone, in arranging our plans. I own that my heart flutters a little, when I think of my guardian. After all, he may not approve our engagement."

"I shall see him this morning, my Julie, and inform him of what has occurred. We have no reason to desire concealment. I have faith in his justice, therefore I do not fear to open my whole heart to him."

"Do you forget his wishes in reference to Zavala?"

"I do not; but as Don Pedro told me a falsehood, I have no right to believe any part of his assertions."

At that instant, Zavala himself entered the room. A glance of

vivid fire shot from his dark eyes, as he beheld the pair standing together, the fair hand of Julie in the clasp of Russell. "A moment more, and their lips would have met," was his mental comment—"*That*, methinks, would have been a sufficient offence to merit death at my hands. Blind fool, beware how you arouse the demon of jealousy in a Spaniard's heart!"

He, however, spoke aloud, and quite calmly:

"Are you aware, Russell, that Col. Alwin has been inquiring for you some time since? He seemed impatient that you could not be found."

"I will go to him instantly."

Julie, after making some slight remark, turned also to leave the room; but Zavala intercepted her.

"One moment, Miss de Bourg—I must again trespass on your patience. Oh, Julie," he impetuously continued, "will you never accept a heart which is filled with the most unchanging love for you? Give me but a faint hope of future success, and I will, as the Israelite of old, serve a long apprenticeship to win you at last."

Julie listened with a degree of calmness which pierced his very soul; and when she spoke, there was a quiet coldness in her tones that seemed a death-knell to his hopes.

"Don Pedro, I had hoped to be spared a renewal of this painful subject. I have, before, been sufficiently explicit, in giving you to understand that I can have no warmer sentiment for you than esteem."

"Say not so, Julie; let my devotion have some weight with you. I love you with an affection incapable of change; without the hope of winning you, the future is desolate. With that hope, I am anything you wish. Speak—let me hope."

"I dare not. I will not trifle with you; and you must have seen enough to convince you that my sentiments towards you are not those of love."

"Esteem is all I ask now, Miss de Bourg. Time will give me your affections; for esteem is their most solid basis."

Julie half arose from the seat she had taken—

"It is useless, Don Pedro, to persist in this persecution; for I can find no softer name for your perseverance in a pursuit which has become extremely annoying to me."

"Cruel—cold-hearted girl! you must love another, or you could not be thus indifferent to my devotion."

"And if I do," she quickly asked, "will the certainty that such is the case release me from your addresses?"

"No—no—beautiful—adored! so long as you are unclaimed as the bride of another, I will not relinquish my hopes of ultimate success."

Julie could not repress a movement of scornful impatience. It was not lost on Zavala; and he set his teeth firmly together to prevent the explosion of his furious anger.

"I regret it for your own sake, Don Pedro. You compel me to

use language which is foreign to my natural disposition. I never can be moved to reverse my present decision. You will find no answering emotions of tenderness in my heart; therefore you may as well cease your efforts to elicit them. I hope I am now understood."

"You, then, refuse wealth, love, high station? Think, Julie, these are all too valuable to be lightly cast away."

"Wealth cannot tempt me; *you* cannot elevate the station of a daughter of a noble, though fallen house; and for your love, I ask it not—I desire it not," replied Julie, with the glow of offended pride mounting to her cheek. "Let me go, Sir—I have listened too long already."

"Stop, Miss de Bourg, I *will* be heard. Nay, turn not away with that angry flush on your cheek; I would not offend, but I must say all I wish, that you may know how idle is the sacrifice you make in favour of one who"——

"I make no sacrifice, Sir," interrupted the lady. "It is no sacrifice to refuse that on which I place no value. After such language, I *will* leave you."

"No—by Heaven! never, until I have wrung from you an avowal of your partiality for Russell, or forced you to regard my suit more favourably," exclaimed Zavala, in his passion forgetting what was due to the object of his love, and his own character as a gentleman. "You have trifled with me, Miss de Bourg. You have allowed me for months to devote myself to you, without discouraging my pretensions."

"You have then misconstrued the common courtesies of life, Sir. Since you force me to be explicit, I will avow my true sentiments. Your society is as distasteful to me as your love; and but for the wishes of my guardian, I should more openly have shown my aversion, long since. You will wring from me neither confessions nor favourable regards by thus forcibly detaining me."

She again seated herself, though scarcely able to repress the tears of wounded pride and insulted dignity which sprang to her eyes.

"Upon my word, Miss de Bourg, a little temper improves you wonderfully. Your cheeks have a most becoming glow, and your eyes flash with almost supernatural fire. You remind me of a priestess in the hour of inspiration. I admire spirit vastly, and I was only trying yours, to see if I *could* move you from that changeless apathy of manner which is so chilling in its politeness. Pray forgive me, Julie, and let us be better friends. Before absolutely rejecting my proposals, see your guardian, and hear what he has to say."

"It is unnecessary, Sir; you have my answer. It is beyond the power of my guardian to inspire me with the sentiments you desire. I am his dependent, it is true, and fondly attached to him, but I am not a child to be either soothed or frightened into obedience."

"Could you see him need what you could bestow, and withhold

it? Could you behold unmoved the man who has been a father to you, humbled—crushed to the earth by the malice of his enemies, when you could raise him from this abyss, and by a word, draw around him a phalanx of brave hearts that would protect him from every danger, and finally elevate him to the high rank his talents merit? Oh, Julie, think a moment before you decide, for on you depends the fate of all you love."

"I do not understand you. I possess neither power nor friends, and I know of no danger which threatens Col. Alwin that I can possibly avert. Seek not to play on my feelings of gratitude towards him, to accomplish your own views, for you will find the attempt vain. I am deeply sensible of my obligations to Col. Alwin, and I esteem him too highly to believe that he will ever use the influence his kindness has obtained over me, in so ungenerous a manner as to ask of me the sacrifice of my own happiness, to ensure his own aggrandizement; though I am at a loss to see how my acceptance of your offer can affect his destiny."

"There are more things in heaven and earth, lovely Julie, than are dreamed of in your young brain. I refer you to Col. Alwin himself; he will solve the mystery. Meanwhile we are friends, I trust. Nay, turn not away so disdainfully; I did but try to provoke your anger, when I spoke of Russell. Forget that, and I will promise to forget your cruel language. The day may come, fair lady, when to recal the words you have used to me this morning, would not be agreeable to you. Nay, think me not too presumptuous. I will hope against hope, until the irrevocable vow is recorded which gives you to another. Let me seal my forgiveness on this fair hand."

As he spoke he forcibly seized her hand, and pressed it to his lips. More annoyed than she chose to betray, Julie escaped to her own room, and fastening herself in, she gave free course to the agitating emotions she had been scarcely able to repress in the presence of her tormentor. She surmised enough of Col. Alwin's projects to reveal to her the precipice on which she stood; yet she hesitated to believe that he, who had so nobly snatched her from destitution, could ask of her so great a sacrifice, could crush her heart by making it a stepping-stone to greatness. Yet she shuddered, and her spirit trembled before the vague fears which loomed dimly before her.

A servant came with a message from Col. Alwin. He wished to see Miss de Bourg immediately.

For an instant Julie's heart stood still; but summoning all her resolution, she prepared to obey the summons.

CHAPTER XVI.

When Russell joined Col. Alwin, there was a settled gloom on his countenance, and the stern frown which bent above his gleaming

eyes was ominous of the storm about to burst over the head of his secretary. He motioned him to a seat, and taking a letter from his pocket, said—

"Am I to understand from this paper, that as soon as you have found yourself independent of my favour, you decline any further co-operation with me in the expedition which I am about to undertake?"

Russell raised his head and looked him calmly though respectfully in the face, as he replied—

"You perfectly understand me, Col. Alwin. For the cares you have bestowed upon me from childhood—for the education which enables me to win my way through the world, I am deeply grateful; yet to evince that gratitude, I cannot think you would ask or accept a sacrifice of principle. You have not deceived me, Sir; you aim a deadly blow at the best interests of my native land, and I dare not contribute even my feeble aid to strengthen that blow. I shall, as I informed you in that communication, withdraw myself from this place before the tenth of December, and thus escape the imputation of having any interest in the meeting which is then to take place."

"Go then, Sir," said Col. Alwin, proudly—passionately. "Go and denounce your benefactor to the government, and obtain the reward due to treachery of the basest character."

"Stop—stop, Sir—such language you know to be unmerited."

He struck his hand angrily on the table, and went on in a more excited manner—

"Go, Sir, and do as I bid you; but that day will be the darkest of your life, and the fiends in hell can scarcely suffer keener torture than will be yours, when you learn whom you thus devoted to ignominy, perhaps to death. Ingrate that you are, thwarting me at every turn! I feel that I have warmed a serpent in my bosom, which would distil the deadly venom of its ingratitude into my very heart."

"Oh, Sir, speak not thus to me," said Russell, with proud humility. "I would shield that high heart from every sorrow, could the power be mine. Denounce you, who have been benefactor, friend, everything to me! Denounce him for whom I would die, but cannot dishonour myself! Oh, no, Sir, you know me too well to believe that I can ever injure one who has been a friend to me when I possessed no other."

Col. Alwin was softened by the earnestness and emotion with which this was uttered.

"I *do* believe you, Charles; but I feel your unkindness in leaving me, when you may essentially serve me, and at the same time secure your own fortunes."

Russell shook his head. "If anything could tempt me to remain, Sir, it would not be the temptation of any reward beyond the gratification of serving you. I shall remain here no longer than I can obtain a conveyance from the island."

"And you are resolved?"

"I am quite so; but before I leave, I wish to inform you of a circumstance which materially affects my future plans."

He then concisely stated to Col. Alwin his recent betrotnal to Miss de Bourg, which only waited his sanction to become an engagement. From the expression of his guardian's countenance he could gather little: he appeared to be on his guard from the moment the subject was commenced. When he had finished, Alwin merely asked—

"Were you not aware, when you asked my consent to such an unworldly proceeding as this, that Julie is, so far as I am concerned, pledged to Zavala?"

"Don Pedro informed me of some such thing, but forgive me, Sir, if I doubted the fact. I could not believe that *you* would require of Miss de Bourg, the acceptance of a man for whom she has ever betrayed a marked dislike."

"The whims of young ladies are not to be accounted for," said Col. Alwin, drily. "It is a mere caprice in Julie to treat Zavala with coldness. I, as the guardian of her interests, cannot permit her to reject so unexceptionable an offer. What could you bestow on her, as an equivalent for the advantages of such an alliance?"

"The heart of an honourable man, united with the energy which is the best guarantee of future success. As *my* wife, Julie will be far happier even in the humble privacy of narrow fortune, than in a palace with such as Zavala."

"Of that you will permit me to be the best judge. You remember the old adage,—'When poverty comes in at the door,' &c. Believe me it is far more true than young romance is willing to believe. You possess talent and energy, but years must elapse—the best years of your life, before they can receive the meed of wealth, perhaps even of independence. If health is granted, you may succeed; if not, you sink into a premature grave, leaving the being for whose sake this weary toil has been endured, a victim to the anguish of vain regrets. She is more than woman, not to contrast her lowly, care-clogged existence, with the brilliant destiny which might have been hers, had she not perversely closed her heart against the arguments of affection and experience. Is not my picture correct?"

"No, Sir; it is too highly coloured. There is a possibility that such as you paint it, my destiny may be; but still, there is a brighter side to the canvas, on which Hope would fix her gaze. We are both young; and the sorrows which experience gives, have not cast their shadows over our hearts. The ills of life, whatever they may be, were far lighter shared together than endured apart; and its bright scenes will borrow an additional lustre from the tried affection which will cast its charm around our existence."

"You are too poetic for me, Sir. I know that your visions will not bear the test of reality. Had you continued with me, I certainly believe that fortune would soon have been within your grasp; but

still I cannot hold forth the hope of obtaining Julie, as an inducement to you to remain true to your duty. Yes—I repeat it, your *duty;* for to me you owe far more than to an imaginary tie of honour —a scruple in favour of father land; as if any soil that yields us what we require, should not be dearer than the barren spot of earth, on which, perchance, we were born."

"We will not argue on that subject, Sir, since my resolution is irrevocably taken. Am I to understand that you refuse your consent to our engagement?"

"Undoubtedly. With my sanction Julie weds Zavala and no other. Remember that you circumvent my views at your peril; there is so much depending on her union with him—so much of vital importance to me, that all my power shall be employed to bend her to my will. Julie *will not* be yours."

"On that subject, Sir, of course she will decide for herself. If I have too confidingly trusted in the strength of her affection, I must bear the bitterness of disappointment with such philosophy as I may be able to command. We fully understand each other now, Sir?"

"We do; our interests are henceforth distinct, if not conflicting. Go, Sir; your destiny is of your own choosing; I would have smoothed your pathway to eminence, but you repel my services. Remember, should you ever repent this step, my favour is still open to you."

"I thank you," said Russell with emotion. "Would to heaven I could remain, but it cannot be. I will ever remember the debt of gratitude I owe you."

He hurriedly left the room.

"By heaven, a noble fellow!" muttered Alwin. "If I held the destiny of Julie less securely in my hand, I should fear he might mar all my projects. She, poor girl, may struggle to free herself, but like the fluttering of the netted bird, she only entangles herself more deeply. I must calm myself for the interview with her; gentleness and kindness, with woman, always succeeds best."

There was some shrinking of soul at what he was about to undertake, for no man better understood the windings of a woman's heart; and he knew that to crush all that was noble and true in a young spirit, was now his aim.

When Julie obeyed his summons, she found him measuring the floor with rapid steps, endeavouring to obtain the mastery over his chafed and impatient spirit, before he addressed her whom it as his policy to persuade into submission. Unable to control her tremulous emotion, Julie gladly took the seat he pointed to, an shading her face with her hand, that he might not see the changes which swept over it, she awaited his communication in silence.

At length he approached, seated himself beside her, and taking her hand in his, spoke in those soft persuasive tones which no one knew better how to assume—

"Julie, my child—my beloved girl, look up at me. Do not avert your eyes, as if to shut out some horrid vision from your sight.

My only wish is, to act in such a manner as to secure your happiness. Believe me, my child, this is the paramount object I have in view. I only wish to secure your future life from repentance."

"Then you cannot wish me to accept Don Pedro, as he more than insinuates. Oh, father, let me die sooner than become his bride!"

"My dear little enthusiast, your language is too strong. Zavala is a high minded, honourable gentleman, and as such I have sanctioned his addresses to you. I wish to see my beautiful Julie filling a station befitting her birth and the education she has received."

Julie's heart died within her, for now she understood his wishes; she intuitively felt all the power that would be brought forward to ensure their accomplishment.

"Can you who have taught me to appreciate all that is noble and honourable, practise such a self-deception where this hard, false man is concerned? You cannot condemn me to a fate of such unmitigated wretchedness as to will me to link my lot with his? Speak, dear Sir, and exculpate yourself from such a suspicion."

Again Col. Alwin arose and paced the floor many moments. His better nature stirred within him, but the voice of stern necessity cried aloud—sacrifice to her, or ruin to himself. He knew the man he had to deal with, and he felt that the time for hesitation was past. Julie *must* yield, or he himself be ingulfed in ruin. There was deep tenderness in his manner as he again drew near and looked down on her.

"Julie, my poor child, I would not ask this great sacrifice from you, but I am in the power of this man. I have tried to save you. I have offered everything, and nothing else will satisfy him. You are the only bride."

"Then *I* can save you; *I* will be inflexible. All his pleadings will fall on a cold ear—a loveless heart. On you he dare not wreak his vengeance for my insensibility."

"Alas! it is a false hope, Julie. No person on earth can make him relinquish this marriage. *My* wishes too should have some weight with you. Zavala offers you all that any reasonable woman can ask; his faults, such as they are, will not materially interfere with your daily happiness; and I have pledged myself that within a month you will become his bride."

Julie clasped her hands and wept bitterly.

"Silly girl; thus to weep over a fate that many would envy. The day will come when you will thank me for my present conduct."

"Oh, no—I cannot—I dare not. Oh, father, can you condemn me to wretchedness by forcing me to marry one man, when I love another? In all things else I will obey you, but in this—never!"

"Then I am lost; utterly ruined by your obstinacy. Julie, calm yourself, and listen to reason. I act by you as I should by my own daughter, in such an emergency. Do not return all my cares as Russell has done, by abandoning me to a fate of which you little

dream. I know that you love him, but he would link your fate to poverty, wretchedness, and bitter repentance. Your destiny was placed in my hands by your dying mother; and as her representative, I save you from such suffering as must inevitably follow such a misalliance."

"By the memory of that mother to whose last hours you brought consolation, I conjure you to spare her child. By all the affection you have hitherto borne me, I conjure you to save me from this unutterable misery."

"Julie, I compel you to nothing. Your own feelings must guide you in this decision. If your affection for me is what I have hoped, you will not refuse to stretch forth your hand to save me from destruction; even if Don Pedro should claim it as the reward of assistance which must be obtained at any sacrifice. I stand on the edge of an abyss, into which I must plunge, unless you hold me back. My figure of speech is not too strong; for, alas! I speak but the literal truth. Take this letter with you to your own apartment, and, when you are calmer, read it, and ponder on its contents. It was addressed to you by your mother in her last hours. I have hitherto withheld it, because I wished your affection for me to be your only motive for endeavouring to please me. I feared that her last injunctions might have an undue influence over your mind; but now, I hesitate no longer—'tis for your own interest, as well as mine, that I now give it. Read it—reflect on it, and then decide your own destiny and *mine*."

Julie took the letter, and Col. Alwin left her alone. It was simply addressed to "My daughter," and long did her tearful eyes rest on the lines traced by the hand which had once caressingly clasped her infant form—which were dictated by the heart that had loved her with the passionate fondness of a young mother's affections. Long, long was it, before those lines, so touching in their utter desolation, ceased to swim before her sight. She at length commanded herself sufficiently to read the following words:

"My Child:—When these lines speak to your heart of the mother who now watches beside you, the hand that traced them will have returned to the dust whence it sprang. Oh, my daughter, had Heaven so willed it, I could have wished to be spared to you—to form your mind to love and revere virtue; to see you expanding into womanhood beneath my fond gaze, and to trace in your clear eyes, and your soft smile, the strong resemblance you bear to your father. The occurrences of the past crowd upon me, and darken my soul when the image of that father rises before me. Fancy presents to me his agony, his uncertainty respecting the fate of his wife and child; and, last sad scene of the dire tragedy, the axe of the executioner reeking with the life-blood of my noble husband!

"Unhappy France! deluged with the blood of thy bravest and thy best, when will thy smiling valleys be freed from the tyranny of the vampires who prey on thee? Remember, my Julie, that you

are a native of that desecrated soil; the descendant of a noble line, whose honours now are prostrate in the dust. Thee, the sole representative of two illustrious houses, I leave an orphan, without friends —without a home to shelter thee. I must leave thee to the cold charity of an unfeeling world, in a land of strangers! My child—my child, as I gaze on thy innocent brow, as thou calmly sleepest beside me, my heart is torn with agony. What will thy future be? Thy orphan years untended by a mother's watchful love—thy infant cries unheeded, thy young heart withered by the cold blast of poverty. Oh, could my hand be nerved for the deed, to save thee from the ills I apprehend for thee, I would in mercy plunge a dagger into thy heart, and suffer the innocent spirit to wing its way to Heaven, while yet unsoiled by crime. Father of the fatherless, hear a mother's agonized prayer, and in mercy remember my orphan babe to thy care I commit her.

* * * * * *

"My prayer has been heard. The widow and the fatherless were not abandoned in their need.

"The last sands of life are ebbing fast, and I must hasten to a close. When I had thrown aside my pen, and was weeping in utter desolation over thee, my babe, the Heaven, whose mercy I had invoked, sent to my aid one of the noblest of men. Like an angel of mercy, he came to soothe my distracted heart; to him am I indebted for the calmness with which I look on my approaching fate. He has removed the weight from my soul, by promising to be a parent to thee; to watch over thee with all a father's affection. Oh, my Julie, be to him as a daughter; show to this admirable man that thou art grateful for the benefits conferred upon thy mother, and upon the helpless years of thy own infancy.

"In the levity of youth, should thy heart prompt thee to be unmindful of his slightest wish, turn to this letter and read my last injunctions, *Prefer his wishes to thy own*—a feeble return to make to him, who has been thy guardian angel. Never fail in rendering him the affectionate obedience due from a daughter to a beloved father. Should thy spirit ever rebel against his commands, remember the words of thy dying mother, and yield thy will to his: so noble a mind will require of thee only what will promote thy happiness and well-being.

"And now, my daughter, farewell; a few more hours, and the heart which overflows with such unutterable love for thee, will be at rest. The past, with its bright dreams and dark realities, is vanishing before me, and, for me, in this world, there is no future. I am resigned—life is no longer a dream of bliss to me. Too weak to bear misfortunes, the last cord of my heart was shivered when I saw my country fading in the distance, and knew that *there* was all that remained of my noble—my adored Adolphe. My child, farewell.

"JULIE DE BOURG."

Wild and passionate were the tears which relieved the almost bursting heart of the unhappy daughter. The image of her dying mother was before her, weeping drops of agony over her forlorn babe, with no hope for the future, no consolation for the past; and then she beheld that noble-hearted man, bending over the couch of death, whispering peace to the broken-hearted.

"And shall I, *her* child, the object of his bounty, refuse him anything he may require? Oh, God, pardon my rebellious ingratitude!"

Well was it for her, that Col. Alwin was not present at that moment; she would have thrown herself upon his bosom, and entreated pardon for having opposed his slightest wish. She would have sacrificed happiness, hope, and truth, sooner than believe herself ungrateful.

She retired to her room to reflect on the wretched alternative left to her, and pleaded indisposition as an excuse for not appearing again that day. Her mind was tossed on a sea of perplexity and doubt, and she knew not whither to turn for aid or advice.

CHAPTER XVII.

The apartment of Julie was on the first floor, and she could distinctly hear every noise from without. In a few moments after the family left the supper room, a low tap was several times repeated on her window, and the voice of Russell pronounced her name. Hastily wiping the traces of emotion away, she drew aside the curtain, and partially unclosed the window.

"Dearest Julie," he hurriedly said, "I know all. Col. Alwin commands you to marry Zavala. Only be true to yourself—to me, and all shall yet be well. Answer me, Julie, and say that you will neither be forced nor persuaded into this union."

The light from the apartment streamed on his face, and she saw that he was pale as death.

"Oh, Charles, if you did indeed know all! I have been writing to you: here take the letter, and this one also. It is from my mother, and has nearly broken my heart. It contains her dying injunctions to me. Read that first, and then mine."

"Julie," said Russell impressively, "beloved of my whole life, can you be induced to waver in the faith you have plighted to me? Can the persuasions of an ambitious man sway or dazzle your mind so far as to make you forget its truth and faith? Oh, Julie, Julie, such love is not mine!"

"Read your answer *here*," she replied, turning her pallid face so as to permit the light to fall upon it.

That marble brow, those hueless and quivering lips, were indeed sufficient testimony to the overwhelming struggle through which she was passing.

"Forgive me for the doubt," he murmured, appalled at the change

which a few hours of suffering had wrought in that bright and glowing beauty. "I fear his power no longer."

"Go, go," said Julie, hurriedly, "I hear steps at the door—pray, leave me."

"I will, but in one hour expect an answer to your letter."

Julie hastily closed the window, and Russell retired to his room. He perused Madame de Bourg's letter with deep interest, and felt the strong hold the possession of such a document gave Col. Alwin over the mind of her daughter. Julie's was short, but it breathed the anguish and uncertainty of her mind, united with the strongest affection for himself.

"You have read the last words of my mother! Oh, Charles, pity and forgive me if my mind has wavered. Her voice speaks to me from the tomb, and calls on me to make the sacrifice my guardian requires of me. I love you with a faith as fervent, as pure, as ever woman vowed: madness may come to my brain, but forgetfulness—never! When his safety is perilled, perhaps his life involved, can I refuse to save him? Never—never! My heart will break, but I will not be ungrateful. Forget me—yes, forget. I can bid you do it, and yet live. Go forth to the world, and in its many excitements forget the beloved of your early years. For man there are other pursuits, other interests, besides those of love. Be great, be happy: and when I hear of your success I shall be able to smile, even amid the wretchedness of my own lot."

Russell immediately replied to her—

"I have read your letter, my beloved Julie, and never will I, never can I forget. With the knowledge that you love me, I *will not* yield you to my rival: I will not suffer you to be forced into the measures of Col. Alwin. Could your mother have foreseen the use to which her last farewell would have been put, do you suppose it would ever have been written? Could she, loving you as every line of her letter evinces, have commanded you to immolate yourself on the shrine of another's ambition? Oh, no! believe it not.

"At present Col. Alwin's safety is *not* implicated. If he would lay aside all thoughts of his meditated enterprise, all would be well Zavala is as deeply concerned in his plans as himself, and the most that could result from his defection would be their miscarriage He must eventually fail; and think, beloved, what will be his remorse when he finds that he has forced you to seal your own misery by wedding Zavala, and the sacrifice is unavailing.

"Meet me to-morrow evening in the summer-house, which is situate at the lower end of the grounds; at this season it will be deserted, and I have much to say that is important to both of us. Oh! my beloved Julie, I have trusted implicitly on your truth; let not my trust prove an arrow wherewith to pierce me to the heart.

"C. R."

As Julie folded the paper, Isabel entered the room.

"Your absence has made a sad gap, Julie. You cannot think how *distrait* we have all been. My father seems gloomy and out of spirit, while his shadow, Don Pedro, looks black as a thunder-cloud. Russell, too—a cloud seems to have settled on his usually buoyant temper, though, to do him justice, he did not long remain among us to sadden with his gloom. He retired immediately after supper, and I have not seen him since."

"I have," said Julie. "He has been to my window, and this letter is from him."

"A clandestine correspondence! Nay, you must be fond of romance, for there can be no necessity for such concealment."

"Alas! Isabel, you are wrong there. A dark cloud gathers over my fate, and I know not how to escape the storm it portends."

Isabel looked at her attentively. She said gravely—

"I should not have been so thoughtless, Julie. I see that a headache alone could not have produced the changes I behold in you. I left you to solitude as you wished, because I thought a throbbing brain was best left to silence and slumber; but you have not slept. What is the matter? I must know; I earnestly entreat that you will conceal nothing from me."

"I cannot tell it; read it for yourself."

Isabel took the letters she held towards her, and hastily ran her eye over them. As she read, many rapid changes swept over her expressive features; her cheek flushed—her lips quivered, and at length she burst into tears. In a few moments she dashed away the drops, and approached Julie with great tenderness.

"I could not have believed this of my father. Dear Julie, let my affection compensate you in some measure for his unkindness. Believe me he is under some delusion. This odious Zavala has thrown some spell over his upright mind, or he could not act thus."

"What shall I do? How act in such a dilemma?"

"Meet Charles as he desires, and if my father still continues inxorable, consent to leave the island with him. This ungenerous advantage must not be taken of you; secure your own happiness, even at the expense of his disappointment; it is your inalienable right. My father will soon forgive you, for it is only the singular influence Don Pedro has obtained over him which makes him act thus. I, his daughter, would prevent the remorse which will prey on his mind should you sacrifice yourself to promote his views, and he finds that the being he should have protected from the shadow of evil, is made wretched through his selfishness. I know you, my dear, better than you do yourself, and your heart would slowly break beneath the weight of blasted hopes. A few months hence and my father will thank me for having given this advice."

Long and earnest was the conversation which ensued, and something like a ray of hope lit up the countenance of Julie at its close. Her resolution was taken, and at least the misery of indecision over.

That night neither of the friends slept much, though Julie was deceived by the deep regular breathing of Isabel into the belief that she sank to rest soon after they retired; but in that young heart was planted the first thorn that ever rankled there. Her father—her worshipped, nearly deified father—had descended from his exalted sphere to commit an act which all the sophistry of affection could not excuse; and deep and bitter were the thoughts which drove sleep from her pillow.

If there is a human feeling on which angels may smile, it is the deep and pure love of a daughter for her father. When the hallowed tenderness of an affectionate heart is thus bestowed on the altar of filial affection, it is free from the doubts and jealous fears of love; calmly it flows on its placid course, as unruffled as ripple the waters of the sequestered lake, sheltered from the wild tornado's sweep. The heart securely reposes on the kindness which has never failed it, knowing that love to be unchanging in its warmth, undimmed by the lapse of time. How agonizing was the conviction to that young and untried spirit, that the first lesson of the deceitfulness, the selfishness of life, was learned from the being so confidingly trusted—so earnestly beloved!

At the hour appointed for the interview, Julie threw a shawl around her, and stole from the house. A sensation of desolation and loneliness nearly overcame her as she hurried along the pathway, now covered with the autumn leaves, which rustled beneath her light tread. The wind sighed mournfully among the trees; and the agitated waters of the Ohio breaking in sullen waves upon the shore, were in unison with the scene.

The place of meeting was a pavilion about half a mile from the dwelling. It was a small building, latticed on three sides, and the fourth, which faced the south, opened on a scene of great beauty. In summer, overreaching trees embosomed it in shade, and the flashing of the winding river came in glimpses of light through their umbrage. Flowers lifted their graceful heads, and gave soft fragrance to the atmosphere, while their own beloved season lasted; but now they were withered and fallen, like the bright hopes of her who passed sadly among them, a pale image of sorrow. Within, the little building was fitted up with some attention to comfort, and during pleasant weather it was a favourite resort for the family. Many brilliant and happy associations were connected with that spot in the mind of Julie, but they only saddened her more deeply, as she now pursued her solitary way.

Russell met her at the entrance. In silence he led her to a seat, and placed himself by her. He looked weary and wretched, though a faint gleam of joy had lighted up his expressive features at their first meeting.

"Julie," he at length said, and the melancholy sound of his deep voice thrilled painfully to her heart—"I have asked this interview of you, to induce you to decide your fate and my own. I am about

to make a request which will prove how mad is the passion which can lead me to hope for an instant that you will accede to it."

He paused, and Miss de Bourg faintly uttered—

"Name it——"

"It is this," he replied, taking her cold hand and pressing it fervently to his lips—"Will you fly with me from the protection of a guardian who exceeds the authority of a parent? from one who proves himself unworthy of the name of protector, when he avails himself of the ties of gratitude to act the part of a tyrant? You have said you love me; prove it now, by consenting to my proposal."

"I dare not—my father has declared that an impassable barrier exists between us. Oh, Charles, I dare not."

"Believe him not, dearest Julie. He would place one himself by uniting you with Zavala. I have no wish to deceive you, my dearest girl. In flying with me you abandon him who has been a father to you—you relinquish friends, wealth, home. Can you give up all these, without repining, and find in my love a sufficient compensation for the sacrifice? That love, Julie, shall encircle you with an atmosphere of tenderness which death alone shall chill."

Earnest, full of persuasion were the manly tones of that beloved voice; and Julie suffered her head to rest upon his shoulder, while she wept long and bitterly. She at length spoke in a low decided tone—

"My choice is made. I will go with you."

"Then you are mine for ever," exclaimed the lover, clasping her in his arms—"Yet, pause one instant, Julie—think once more—can you assure yourself that you are consulting your own happiness as well as mine."

He raised her head from his breast, and looked an instant on that pale face. It was not to seek a confirmation of what he already knew, but to read there his triumph over all the clinging affections she had cherished from childhood; and his ear drank in the low murmured sounds of her reply with wild delight.

"All—all has been reflected on. I have thought of this termination to our love, until my heart shrank from the trial; but now it has come, that affection which you cannot doubt will support me through it. Mistrust not my tears, Charles; they are not for the struggles before me, but the loved ones I must leave. My heart is firm in its determination; for it is devoted to thee. Forgive this weakness; it will soon be past, and then I am thine alone."

A figure darkened the entrance, and looking up they beheld Col. Alwin! He regarded them an instant in silence; and then said in a cold sarcastic tone—

"I interrupted a fine scene, I perceive, by my inopportune arrival. I must beg to be pardoned for spoiling anything so sentimental. Return home, Julie, and leave me alone with this mad boy, to convince him of the folly of his present wishes. Return to your room, and prepare your mind to yield its assent to my wishes."

"Never"—she exclaimed—"Death were preferable to such an alliance."

"Julie," said he in a milder tone—"I will see you on my return home. Leave me now; and you, Russell, remain here; I have that to communicate which will change the whole tenor of your future life. I would have concealed it, but you force me to be explicit."

Julie silently obeyed; for there was a power of command about this man, that forced all to bend before his mysterious sway, almost without remonstrance. As her retreating footsteps died on his ear, Col. Alwin turned to Russell, and said—

"Now, Sir, the secret which has been confined to my own breast from the hour of your birth, must be confided to you; but under the strictest seal of silence. Even to her who has just left us, you must not divulge it. I must now tell you what you are, and who it is you thus recklessly brave. You are——"

There was a slight tremor in his voice, and he paused.

"What?" asked Russell, haughtily.

"I will tell you, Sir," said Alwin, rising from the seat on which he had thrown himself, while his form seemed to dilate with suppressed passion. "You are the bane of my repose—the living memento of transactions it harrows my very soul to recal to my mind. The basest reptile that crawls the earth is scarcely more loathsome to me than your presence, at hours in my life, has been; yet I have endured it for years. To me, you are indebted for all you have ever received; and yet you turn against me, and endeavour to win the consent of my adopted daughter to elope from my protection, at a crisis when my life may, in all probability, depend on her acceptance of another. Even if it were possible for Julie to be yours, I would sooner see her hearsed at my feet, than the bride of any other but Zavala. Would you know the reason why she is beyond your reach? Listen, and you shall hear it—learn, also, my right to your obedience; and mark me, Sir, it shall be rendered. You are my *son*."

The last words were almost pronounced in a whisper, but they were fearfully distinct to Russell. He recoiled before the rigid brow which frowned on him—the sarcastic lips that uttered such a revelation.

"The proof! the proof! I will not, I cannot believe it!"

"'Tis *here*," said Alwin, striking his hand upon his breast. "Here it has lain for years, gnawing my very heart-strings—withering joy like an unmuttered curse. But there are other proofs which you shall have. You are my child, but never for you has the heart of a father responded to the endearing epithet. Turn away from me, boy; there is *her* eye glaring on me. At times I believe I hate you!"

"Why—why then was I fostered by your care? Why educated to fill the station I occupy, if I possess no claims on the affection of him who bestowed those favours?"

"Fool—fool! Are you not my child, and hers too, who was

once dearer to me than life itself? The world, 'tis true, knew nothing of the tie that existed between us; still my pride shrank from permitting a son of mine to live in obscurity, without an education to fit him for the station all of my blood shall hold. That feeling made you what you are. You owe me no thanks for what I have done, for I never look on you without a sensation of bitterness swelling up in my heart."

"Father—oh! can a father indeed behold his child with such feelings as you describe?"

"Call me not father," said Alwin, in a hasty loud tone. "That title is not for you to bestow on me. The child of her whose remembrance has poisoned my life shall never call me by that hallowed name. I have suffered—I have *not* conquered; and there are times when I believe I tremble on the verge of madness, but they are brief. This clear intellect, this far-reaching ambition, were not given me to become the wreck of one haunting memory—though that memory is the blight of humanity. Now you have heard my long-cherished secret, leave me for ever. I cannot longer tolerate your presence."

"Be it so, Sir," replied Russell, mournfully. "What you have this day revealed, has destroyed the brightest illusion that man ever cherished. That I love Miss de Bourg wildly—passionately, you well know; but I can no longer ask her to share my future destiny. I go hence immediately. I will no longer be a pensioner on your bounty; it has already been too long extended to one so abhorred. Through my agency, the tie so recently made known to me shall never be divulged; and believe me, Sir, this is the last time I shall willingly appear in the presence of one who cherishes such unnatural feelings towards me. I ask no assistance; I will accept of none. My profession will secure to me an independence; and he, who has now no link to bind him to the world, will require nothing more from it than a bare subsistence."

He bowed proudly and turned away, with feelings it would be vain to attempt describing.

That night, a packet of papers was placed in his hands by Col. Alwin, and with a heart wrung with bitter anguish, he read the proofs of what he would have given worlds to believe false. He wept over the faded characters of a mother's writing, and wished that the same grave had closed over mother and child. Some writer says, "that men weep but once, and then their tears are blood." Bitterer tears were never shed, than were wrung from the haughty eyes of Russell on that night. He wept for his mother, his stern father, and for his own blighted hopes—and desolated heart.

CHAPTER XVIII.

On the following morning, as Isabel was leaving the breakfast-parlour, Russell spoke to her, and requested an interview of a few moments. She turned into the drawing-room and seated herself in silence, for her heart was full to overflowing, as she looked in his face, and saw the traces of deep suffering in his pale cheek and heavy eyes. Russell walked up and down the room for some moments, before he could command himself sufficiently to speak. He at length said—

"I leave you to-day, probably for ever. I wished to see you once more before we part; though now, so many thoughts come rushing on me, I know not what to say."

"Leave us! leave my father! Oh, Charles—why will you do this? Why be so precipitate, when all may yet be well—my father must relent."

"Never, Isabel, never. You do not know, you cannot conceive the gulf that separates us. I have suffered during the past night what words can never express. I have read of one whose hair turned white, during the age of suffering passed in one night, and deemed it fabulous, but now I am no longer sceptical; we know not how much we can suffer and yet live. I have had my hopes rudely torn from my heart, and, bleeding as it was, a bitter caustic applied to its wounds; the iron has entered my soul, and never again can I be as I once was. Oh, Isabel, to be spurned, despised, where we have looked for affection, is bitter—bitter."

He bowed his head upon his hands, and seemed struggling to regain composure. The tears Isabel vainly endeavoured to repress streamed over her pallid cheeks, as she replied—

"Surely, Charles, there must be some mistake—some misunderstanding. My father cannot be so cruel as you represent him. *He* could not thus have wounded—have spurned you. Has he not ever regarded you as his son?"

"His son! *his* son!" exclaimed Russell, "Oh, God, what would I not give to believe—Ah! what am I saying? Excuse me, Isabel, my head is not as clear as it should be. I should be the last person to say anything disrespectful of your father, for heretofore he has indeed been one to me: let him now act as he will, he can never cancel the obligations I owe to him. I go to-day; we may never meet again—but should fate so order it, remember my love for you. No brother could have been more devoted in his affection than I have been. Let it appeal to your heart, when time and absence may have taught you indifference to the friend of your youth; and then be just to my memory."

"You must not go. Let me see my father. I will appeal to him—his affection refuses me nothing. He cannot remain immovable. When he sees my poor Julie he will relent. If he

persists in his cruel determination to unite her fate with that of Zavala, it will cause her death."

"Ah, Isabel, your entreaties will be of no avail. On that subject he is immovable. I must resign all claim to her, but not in favour of Zavala—he is unworthy of her. I do not say this from motives of envy; such a feeling is far from my heart. He is treacherous. He would win Julie, and then refuse the guerdon offered for her hand. Dearest Isabel, on you I rely to save her from such a fate. Mine she can never be, but I would rescue her from the unspeakable wretchedness of being his wife—to be the idol of a week, or a month perhaps, then cast aside to weep in loneliness over her desolate lot. Sustain her in my absence, and let her not yield to the entreaties of your father. For myself, I only ask the kind remembrance of friendship; I dare not claim more. There is a mystery hanging around my conduct which I cannot explain. You have known me from my childhood, and you have never known me to commit a dishonourable action; do not now let suspicion poison your feelings towards me. Think of me as one more 'sinned against than sinning;' and remember, that wherever my lot may be cast, the recollection of what you have been to me will be cherished as one of the few bright spots in a life, that will hereafter be as barren of interest as it is of hope. I cannot see Julie, but give her this letter; in it I have taken my last farewell of her."

Isabel took the letter, and in a voice nearly choked with sobs, said—

"We never can be so unjust, so ungrateful, Charles, as to believe that any act of yours, however inexplicable, is not founded on reason, and a true regard to honour."

"Thank you, thank you, Isabel, my dear, dear sister; that assurance is inexpressibly precious to my harassed soul: and now, adieu."

She felt his arm encircle her form, his lips pressed to her own, and in another instant she was alone. As the echo of his footsteps died away, she felt as if for Julie the knell of hope had sounded its last peal. The companion of her life, the soother of her childish troubles, was very dear to her; but selfish sorrow had little part in her grief. The image of the pale and suffering Julie was before her, and she almost feared to impart to her the tidings which were to fill the cup of misery to overflowing.

She at length summoned courage to enter her apartment. Julie was lying on the couch, her cheek flushed with fever, and the wildest excitement flashing from her eyes.

"You have seen him, Have you no word—no message from him? Ah, there is a letter; give it to me quickly—'tis yet no crime to read it, to weep over it, to treasure its contents in my heart."

She eagerly snatched it, tore open the envelope, and read the following words:—

"Julie, I would that I had died before being called on to pen these lines, before such overwhelming anguish had fallen upon me. Forgive me for having sought your love! Had I known, could I have dreamed of the wretchedness it must bring to us, I would have fled from the witchery of your smile: have torn from my heart the spell your loveliness cast over it.

"Why—oh, why did not some warning come to us? Why did not the voice of a guardian angel whisper, that our love was destined to darken all our hopes of future happiness? Here, in this last record of my love for you, let me dare to tell you how engrossingly I have loved you. It was a selfish passion, and has brought with it its own punishment. I sought to make a paradise of earth, and trusted all my happiness in one frail bark, which the wild waves have passed over, and shattered into a thousand fragments; yet each fragment is dearer to my heart than argosies freighted with the treasures of the east. The solitary light that gleamed on the dark and fathomless future is quenched, as I cast from me the only hope that made life desirable.

"Dearest Julie, I have endeavoured to calm my heart, and I have knelt before the throne of an insulted God, to pray for forgiveness for so wildly loving the being he created, to the exclusion of his own image. No prayer came to my lips; no softness to my heart; the cords of anguish were too tightly drawn around it.

"I have this night read a history of suffering, and I learned from it that which, if known to me one short year since, would have saved us from this unhappiness. I dare not tell you why we are separated, yet such is the sad truth; and never, never can we realize the bright anticipations we have indulged.

"I cast from me the hopes I have cherished, and I ask from you but *one* favour; the only one I am now entitled to claim—remember me with the affection of a friend—a very dear sister. I cannot say forget me, for that I could not bear. I cannot think with calmness of the heart which once throbbed with warm affection for me, becoming cold and indifferent; that the eye which once brightened at my approach, should flash with greater pleasure on another.

"Oh, Julie, forgive this selfishness. I would say forget me, but now I am suffering too keenly from the blight which has fallen on my heart, to be generous. Wretched myself, I am unwilling that you shall pursue the only course that can ensure your happiness; but I will not always be thus: the time will come when I can bear to hear, and rejoice in the knowledge, that your heart has found another home, and perchance a happier one than I could have offered you. The chilling touch of time may close the wounds that now agonize my very soul, yet never again to me can life wear a smiling face. The forest tree, when scathed by blighting, may as well be expected to put forth bloom and verdure, as my withered heart to feel the gush of affection flowing over the bitterness in

its deepest chambers, and again causing its pulses to thrill with hope and joy.

"Farewell, Julie; we may *never* meet again. I have promised it, and my obedience will be claimed; and why should we meet but to feel more keenly the agony of a separation that must be final?"

Julie read every word without shrinking; but when she had finished, and the conviction came coldly to her heart that they were indeed separated—that all their love was but a mocking phantom, spreading the darkness of desolation over the future, she could no longer control the tide of anguish which threatened to annihilate her reason. She uttered no shriek; she neither fainted nor wept, but sat the mute image of despair, so cold, so pale, that but for the wild expression of agony in her eyes, she might have been mistaken for a marble image of sorrow.

"Julie, my dear, dear girl, speak to me; look up at me," said the alarmed Isabel, stealing her arm around her, and drawing her gently towards her. "Do not give up thus."

The accents of human sympathy appeared to touch a chord in her heart which vibrated to some softer emotion, for large lucid drops fell over the sympathizing bosom to which she was clasped.

"Here; there; 'tis over now," she murmured. "The pang was sharper than death, but 'tis past, and I can now say to hope—Depart, and dwell no longer with me; I have henceforth no companionship with thee. Oh, Isabel, this is deeper wretchedness than I ever dreamed could fall on me, the spoiled and petted child of affection! Alas! the present is only more hideous from the brightness of the past."

Isabel had no consolation to offer, and they wept together. Those bright and lovely beings who had hitherto trodden the flowery paths of life hand in hand, now mingled their tears, and from that sorrow sprang an affection deeper, purer than either had yet known; a love that lasted to the latest hour of existence, brightening as time rolled away.

To Julie, life looked pale and cold; her pathway henceforth lay in shadows, for the sun of hope had withdrawn his beams, and left her desolate. She knew her separation from her lover to be inevitable, for if the obstacle was one that could be overcome, she had that faith in Russell's truth and honour which induced her to believe that he would never have given her up. She had not loved lightly, and time she knew would bring no healing on its wings; for time steals not one ray from the diamond, and her affection for Russell had all the purity and durability of that gem.

And this is life! Disappointed at every turn, and where we have trusted most, our hopes are oftenest crushed and withered by a single breath. This is the life to which we cling with so tenacious a grasp that neither sickness, which destroys the energies of being, nor disappointments, which waken the chords of anguish in

the heart, never again to be lulled to slumber while a pulse beats within it, nor even the scorn and contempt of our species, can loose our frantic hold!

Mysterious gift! which is only bestowed to be withdrawn when wearied with suffering and woe; bowed down with a sense of the hollowness of all we have struggled for and failed to win, or taken when the bloom is on the flower and the glory in the sky! The last are happiest, though they know it not; whom the gods love die young; and the flowers that bloom and exhale their fragrance over the solitary resting-places of such, are a fitting type of the unsoiled spirit which winged its way to the bright abode of angels, while yet unstained by the miseries and crimes of later life.

Suddenly Julie started up—

"Good heavens! what is that? What can it mean?"

A confused murmur of voices sounded through the house.

Mrs. Fitzgerald, pale and trembling, entered, and signed to Isabel to approach her.

"What is it?" asked Julie. "Speak; I can bear it. Has anything happened to Mr. Russell?"

She approached the door as if to leave the room, but Mrs. Fitzgerald threw herself before her.

"Do not leave this apartment, dearest Julie. A meeting has aken place between Zavala and your young friend, and—"

The unhappy girl heard no more: life receded from her frame, nd she fell into the arms which opened to receive her.

CHAPTER XIX.

While Russell was engaged in his interview with Isabel, Zavala was alone with his own dark and passionate thoughts. Rejected, and with such cold contempt—rivalled by one he despised! He felt that Russell's position in life was far inferior to his own, and he could not lay the "flattering unction to his soul," that his rival had not been preferred for himself alone.

"She shall repent it," he muttered, "deeply, dearly repent. I *have* loved her, but that is gone with departed things. I will wed her, and then show her that love has no part in my feelings towards her. The wealth of her haughty line can be claimed and *gamed*, and that shall richly repay me for my present mortification. Were it not for that, I could resign her to the fool's paradise she covets. Let me see—a countess in her own right, with the vast estates of De Bourg; her mother a descendant of a noble house, herself an heiress. The *parvenu* ruler of France welcomes back the old nobility, and restores their estates. I will claim these in right of my wife, and enjoy them; and the splendour of her rank shall be the only compensation for the destruction of her romantic dreams of happiness. As *my* wife, she shall become the slave of my caprices,

shall sue to me for the smiles she now turns coldly from. Yet, oh God, who can look upon that matchless brow, on which heaven has stamped its own impress of beauty and nobleness, and not madly love! The passion of my soul has all been poured forth at the feet of this girl, and I must win her or die."

He seated himself, and wrote two notes containing only the words, "Meet me in the Fairy Glen in half an hour," and addressed them to Russell and Graham. These were despatched by Corporal Black, and then taking out a highly ornamented duelling case, he drew the charges from two pair of richly mounted pistols, and carefully reloaded them.

It would be difficult to trace the varied emotions which passed through his mind while thus engaged. Of these, the paramount one was an intense desire for revenge on the man who had stepped between him and the woman he loved with all the fury of his unbridled spirit. It was not the first affair of the kind in which he had been engaged, and he piqued himself on being a dead shot. He had no scruples of conscience, for in that existence which comes after death, he had little faith. All the hopes and aspirations of his nature were bounded to the narrow circle of our present life, and beyond it he had no wish, no aim. Besides, he had no serious fears as to the result. He had too much confidence in his own skill to believe his life would be seriously endangered by an encounter with Russell, for he knew that he was by no means familiar with the use of the pistol.

When his preparations were completed he hurried to the scene of action. In a few minutes Graham joined him.

"Why have you desired my presence here?" he inquired.

"I believe you understand something of surgery," replied Zavala. "I wish you to act as second to Russell and myself, as well as in the capacity of surgeon, should either be wounded. We fight here immediately."

"Fight! Good God! I hope not. More blood has already been shed in this world than can ever be atoned for. Why should you fight?"

"He is my rival!——"

"Even admitting that to be true, what good can it do to shoot this poor boy? If Miss de Bourg loves him, is he to blame for wishing to wear the jewel he has won?"

"Graham, do not reason like a child," said Zavala, rudely. "Do you think I will fight him because *she* loves him? No, Sir; it is because he has dared to attempt to win her from me, when he was aware that her guardian had absolutely contracted her to me. He has endeavoured to break the engagement, although I confided to him my attachment to Miss de Bourg. I consider his conduct base, and his blood—his blood can alone atone for the injury."

"Do not talk thus. Listen to reason, Don Pedro. Russell leaves to-day. Why can you not let this pass, and be forgotten?"

"Forgotten!" repeated Zavala, stamping with passion. "Forgotten! Do you think mine a nature to forget, or lightly pass over such an injury? No; I will pursue him through the world, sooner than not be avenged. Julie shall yet be mine; but this presumptuous boy shall atone with his blood for the crime of having rivalled me with the only woman I have ever loved. Yes—" he continued slowly, through his shut teeth—"I would bury him ten thousand fathoms below me, and then stamp down the turf upon his bleeding breast: and if I thought the quivering corpse could feel the suffocating earth that was heaped above it, my spirit would gloat on its agony. I have hitherto appeared calm, but it was the unnatural stillness which precedes the tempest. I hate him. I shrink from him with loathing, and I will put it out of his power ever again to cross my path. I am a sure shot; my aim has never yet failed me. Oh, Destiny! be not so cruel as to snatch from me my revenge. My nerves are unstrung; I must calm myself before he appears."

The latter portion of his speech was unintelligible to Graham, but he saw with astonishment, not unmingled with terror, the workings of Zavala's countenance. Those haughty features, which were usually so impervious to scrutiny—so calm to all outward seeming, even when the tempest was raging within, were now convulsed with passion. It appeared as if the demon of his nature had suddenly usurped entire dominion over him, and he possessed no power to control his sway.

"Don Pedro, how can you thus yield to your passions? Russell has not intentionally injured you. For God's sake, command yourself, and think calmly of the consequences to yourself, if you persist in this quarrel. Will you make yourself more acceptable to Miss de Bourg by imbruing your hands in the blood of her lover? Will Col. Alwin pardon you for embroiling yourself with a man he has reared, and looks on as a son? Will Isabel receive you with her wonted kindness after such mad conduct? Reflect, before you see Russell, and involve yourself in such a terrible affair."

"Listen to me, Graham, and believe that my determination is irrevocable. As to making myself acceptable to Julie, that is out of the question; yet she nevertheless must be mine. For Col. Alwin, he dare not—no, he dare not refuse to me, not only his pardon, but seemingly his approbation for putting Russell out of my way. That man, bold, haughty, overbearing as he is, is in my power, and he knows it. For Isabel, I care not. I hold her in subjection, through my power over her father. So long as she fears to give utterance to her resentment, I care neither for her shrinking from me nor for her disdainful lips. To Julie, it will be a just punishment, that the hand which must at some future day clasp hers as the partner of her life, shall be red with the blood of her first lover. Ay—had he a thousand lives, their sacrifice would scarcely appease my restless craving for vengeance. But, here he comes!"

Russell advanced with arms folded, and eyes bent on the ground

An air of profound melancholy distinguished him, and he appeared unconscious of the vicinity of others until Zavala addressed him.

"I am happy, Sir, that you have at last thought proper to obey my commands."

Russell paused; and, looking up, he encountered his haughty and fixed expression. His pale cheek flushed—

"What am I to understand from this address, Don Pedro? I have received no message from you, and I am not conscious that you can have anything of sufficient importance to say to me, to demand my presence here, or elsewhere."

"You are not?" said Zavala, with a sneer which awfully contrasted with his white and convulsed lips. "I suppose you are also unconscious that you acted with duplicity and treachery, when you clandestinely met my betrothed bride last evening, and, but for the fortunate interruption of her guardian, might have succeeded in withdrawing her from his protection? It is for this, Sir, that I call you to an account."

"Don Pedro Zavala," said the young man coldly, "you were some months since aware of my views on this subject. I have never concealed from you my attachment to Miss de Bourg. If treachery and duplicity have been employed, your own conscience tells you, that *I* am not the one who used them. I have made every effort to win her, and I flattered myself with a hope of success; but the illusion is now ended. If it will satisfy you, know that Miss de Bourg can never be mine. I have for ever resigned her."

"No—that does not satisfy me. Can the knowledge that she will not be yours efface the burning thought that her affections have been bestowed upon you? So long as you are in the world, the recollection will haunt me that there is a being in existence who has been preferred before me. I would bury you in oblivion—in her memory, no trace should remain—to recal your presumptuous love, had I the power to command her thoughts. Come, Sir—'tis idle to talk—blood is the only atonement for the injuries I have borne from you. Here are pistols—take your choice."

Russell waved back the proffered weapons.

"What can it now avail to appeal to arms? It will only exasperate Col. Alwin against us both, for bringing the name of his ward in question in an affair of this kind. Calm yourself, Don Pedro, and reflect on the absurdity of compelling a man to fight, who can no longer interfere with your pretensions. I am about to depart for ever from the companions of my youthful hours. Why then seek to take a life whose hopes can no longer clash with yours?"

"Coward—base coward! would you shelter yourself behind respect for Col. Alwin and his ward? The plea shall not avail you, for I swear that one of us shall leave this spot a murderer. The consciousness that the same sun which illumes my path, also gives light to yours, will be misery to me. One of us must die; so choose your weapon."

At these words, the expression of Russell underwent a complete change. From melancholy forbearance, it assumed the rigid outline of stern determination. The marble hue of his complexion did not change, but his lips compressed and his eye dilated, as it measured the form of Zavala; and the thought came to him—"It would be lawful to save my angel Julie, even at the price of blood." He stretched forth his hand, and grasped the pistol—

"After such language, Don Pedro, it is impossible for me to refuse your challenge. Graham, if I fall, you will bear witness to my moderation, and to the manner in which this quarrel has been forced upon me."

"Gentlemen, for Heaven's sake, desist," remonstrated Graham "I cannot see you commit murder in cold blood. Don Pedro—pause one second—retract your unjust language."

"Never—never—one or both must die. If you will not act as our second, we will do without one. Mr. Russell, we will walk fifteen paces, wheel, and step back until within ten, then fire."

"As you please," said Russell; and with an indifference to life which a few hours before he would have deemed impossible, he walked off from his adversary. Not that he was indifferent to the idea of appearing thus suddenly before his Creator, but he felt that not on his soul would rest the guilt of murder. The duel had been forced on him, and the headlong passion of Zavala forced on him the necessity of self-preservation, even to the extent of taking life. With a prayer for forgiveness on his lips, and one brief thought of her he had loved more than his own existence, he turned to meet Zavala.

He advanced with measured steps, and when within the requisite distance, both paused an instant. The eye of Zavala glared with the fierce hate of the panther about to spring upon his victim, as it measured the form of his antagonist; that of Russell was firm, clear, and unwavering in its glance. He was fully aware of the deadly skill of his opponent, and he knew that iron firmness of nerve could alone give him a chance for life. Both fired at the same instant; Russell staggered against a tree, and Zavala brushed his hand over a slight scratch on the temple.

"'Sdeath!" he exclaimed; "my hand trembled, or this shot would have told better."

His ball had struck one of the buttons on Russell's coat, glanced, and wounded him slightly in his shoulder.

Graham advanced to Zavala.

"Are you satisfied, Don Pedro? You have severely, though not mortally, wounded him. Be reconciled, I conjure you."

"Have I not sworn that one or the other shall leave this sod a murderer?" he savagely replied. "No, Sir, I am not satisfied. There are other pistols; I came well prepared; nothing shall turn me from my purpose."

"Don Pedro," said Russell, "I have sufficiently tested my courage

by receiving your fire. This affair should end here; but, if you still persist, God forbid that I should balk you of your humour."

"By the living God it shall not end here! I will not be trifled with. Take the pistol and fire at me, or submit to be shot down with as little remorse as if you were not a human being."

They resumed their former positions, and this time both took deliberate aim. The two reports were so blended that it was impossible to tell which came first. Russell fell, and Zavala staggered to a seat beneath one of the trees. His arm had been shattered by the ball of his antagonist, and hung dangling by his side.

Graham hastened to Russell, who lay apparently without life. The ball had entered his breast.

CHAPTER XX.

Twilight had yielded to night, and the dim light of a shaded lamp only served to make darkness visible in the sick chamber of Russell. The heavy and uneasy breathing of the sufferer was the only sound which broke the stillness around. Graham's knowledge of surgery had saved his friend's life; and fortunately for all who took an interest in his recovery, an old and intimate friend of Col. Alwin, who stood high in the medical profession, arrived at the island the day after the duel. Dr. Crawford had known Russell from his boyhood, and had always manifested much interest in his progress through life. He now devoted himself to his young friend with unwearied assiduity. The struggle had been a severe one, but hope began to dawn upon him; and he sat by the bedside of his patient, with his fingers on his pulse, occasionally administering to him such restoratives as he might need.

Russell at length spoke.

"Doctor, do you think it possible for me to recover? I wish to know the truth; I believe I can bear it."

"We must hope for all things, my dear boy," replied the doctor in a cheerful tone. "The ball is extracted from your most dangerous wound; and with good nursing, I hope soon to see you among us again, as sound and as gay as ever."

Russell sighed heavily. After a pause, he said—

"The illusions of life are over with me. If I live I may become a useful, but never a happy man."

"So every man says who is disappointed in his early hopes. You will live to smile over your present despondency, and to wonder how much imagination and undisciplined sensibility could add to the sorrows you really have to lament. Trust me, Charles, that time brings with it its own balm; and each year, as it passes, will only convince you how fleeting were the sorrows of the last."

"There are some sorrows which cannot be medicined to rest. I bear within my own mind that which it must ever be a misery to me

to remember. I speak not now of my unhappy love for Julie. You have seen and known the progress of that, and I may allude to it without impropriety. It is a deeper weight than even disappointed love, which crushed me to the dust."

Alarmed by the strong emotion with which the last words were uttered, the physician placed his fingers over his lips, and said—

"You are becoming too much excited, my young friend. I must prohibit any further conversation."

Russell acquiesced, and several hours passed in silence.

At length, finding that his patient appeared to be resting tranquilly, the doctor yielded to the somniferous influence of the drowsy god, and leaning back in his large cushioned chair, was soon in a sound sleep

Russell lay for many hours in that state of dreary somnolence which is not sleep, and he had just sunk into a feverish slumber when the warm breath of some one playing on his cheek, aroused him. He unclosed his eyes, and being accustomed to the gloom, he could distinctly see Col. Alwin bending over him as if to ascertain from his breathing whether he slept.

Russell had a faint recollection of seeing that revered form by his side in his delirium; and he also remembered the flitting of a gentle being around his couch, whom he had no difficulty in identifying with Isabel; for Julie, he well knew, would not be permitted to approach him. Col. Alwin folded his arms, and stood motionless beside the couch; and Russell thought he could read sorrow and compassion in the sad expression of his countenance. He at length could not restrain the impulse which compelled him to speak.

"My father!" he uttered in a low tone.

Col. Alwin started.

"I thought you were sleeping. I hope I have not disturbed you."

"Disturbed me! no," replied Russell, with some bitterness. "My busy thoughts will not permit me to sleep. Oh, my father, for such you are, I implore you, be not callous to my appeal. Let the feelings of a parent for once gain the ascendency, and grant the request I am about to make. Tell me the history of my mother; all in her life is a mystery and a darkness to me. I may not live many days; I pray you then to grant this request as if 'twere my last."

"Charles—Charles—you know not what you desire. Why ask me to tear the veil from the harrowing past? I cannot relate that history so fraught with suffering; let it suffice that the miseries of life are over for her. Many—many years have passed since the announcement of her death reached me."

Russell groaned in anguish. After some moments, he added in a more excited tone—

"You then refuse to give me the satisfaction I ask. Oh, Sir, remember that I am her son, and satisfy me at least on one point. Did she not believe herself to be your lawful wife?"

"My lawful wife!" repeated Col. Alwin starting back "Boy—

boy—what do you take me to be? a fiend, or a man possessing the feelings of humanity? Do you believe me capable of practising a fraud on the being who was loved with the wildest passion the human heart can feel? No, boy, from me your mother received no wrong. She was my wife—wedded clandestinely, but with all the ceremonies of the church to which she belonged."

"Oh, God! I thank thee," ejaculated Russell with fervour—"Yet why, if the mother was so loved, why should the child be so loathed? What have I innocently done to imbitter your feelings towards me?"

"Nothing—your unfortunate resemblance to your mother is the root of that bitterness. She deceived me, she wrung the heart that trusted its best hopes of happiness to her. She never loved me—I had proof of that, and we parted. More I cannot, will not say. It is the dark page in the history of my life; and if it were possible, I would for ever erase its records from my memory. Let the subject be henceforth at rest between us."

"I must be satisfied with what you have unfolded. I thank you for even that glimpse into the past, faint and imperfect as it is. It has removed a weight of wretchedness from my heart. I think I can bear to feel the eyes of men once more fixed upon me, and not shrink from their gaze."

"I did not imagine that you could so have misunderstood the correspondence I placed in your hands. Keep those letters; though years have hardened the feelings to which they were addressed, I cannot see them without more emotion than I wish to feel. To you, they will speak of a parent you have never known; to me they breathe only of perfidy, and utter recklessness of everything like truth and good faith. Yes, keep them; I would suffer the dust of time to gather over the memories connected with her, until my mind shall cease even to reflect her image. The time once was, when she who wrote those impassioned letters might have commanded my life. It was no common love; it was the idolatry of a heart susceptible only to overwhelming emotions—they recoiled on myself, and for a season——But I have conquered at last—all may forget if they will."

"My father, you have felt the blight of withered affections passing over your heart—you know all its bitterness—think then of Julie—of my deep disappointment. Withdraw your prohibition, and suffer us to hope for happiness."

"Charles," replied Col. Alwin sternly—"Listen to me, and then ask me to suffer you to wed Julie de Bourg. My very existence depends on her union with Zavala; he holds me——"

* * * * * *

When Dr. Crawford awoke, he was astonished to find Russell with a burning fever, and a new paroxysm of delirium upon him.

Many days elapsed before he was pronounced convalescent. So soon as he was able to travel, he declared his determination to leave the island by the first opportunity. Before his departure, he had a brief interview with Julie, in the presence of her guardian; but it was only an additional sorrow to both, to behold each other with the belief that it was for the last time.

CHAPTER XXI.

A FEW extracts from the journal of Miss de Bourg will explain the transactions of the following weeks.

"Here, at least, I may freely unburden my full heart. How perseveringly have I refused Zavala for two years past; and, until of late, my father appeared perfectly indifferent to it; but now all is changed. He has urged me to consent with such earnestness—such passion, that I have yielded. Never should this consent have been wrung from me had it not been to save him from some peril, which I do not fully comprehend. Yes, he, the proud, the unbending, kneeled to me, and entreated me to have mercy on him—to save him from ignominy. Oh, Father in Heaven! what can he be meditating? In what plans can he be engaged by which even his life is endangered? I tremble when I think what the consequences may be to others, although my own happiness is wrecked in endeavouring to contribute to his success.

"Russell, forgive me! I could not refuse to give security to one who has been the tenderest of parents to me—I have renounced you, yet even you must approve my motives. Yes, *I*, the romantic enthusiast, the being who has loved you with all the devotion of passion, without its selfishness—I have said that I will marry another! And that other! Oh, how my heart shrinks back, when I see how selfish and unfeeling he is, in making my wretched self the bride by which the safety of my guardian is to be purchased.

"For nothing else would I have been forced to such a sacrifice of feeling. No, no, not feeling; I no longer feel; suffering seems to have paralyzed all emotions. Indeed I sometimes fancy my heart has no pulsation, so torpid and heavy does it appear.

"I have told Zavala how deeply I love another, and yet he persists in his desire of marrying me. In two little weeks I shall have renounced the privilege of even thinking on the past. Alas! how different a destiny had I sketched for myself! A loveless home I enter. The spot that should be hallowed by the purest feelings of affection, must be a splendid desert to its mistress. I turn from the prospect of such a future, with a sickness of soul and a feeling of horror I vainly struggle to overcome.

"Another week, and no letter from Russell; not even a line to my father, and he left us in such a miserable state of weakness and depression. I am afraid he is ill among strangers. Zavala

has long since recovered from his wound, though it was not very severe.

"I have been trying to read, but the words conveyed no meaning to my mind. My eyes ran over the pages again and again, but I could not think of them, and at length the book dropped from my hands, and I sat gazing through the window on the river. The waters were troubled as my own heart, and the dreariness of the scene seemed to me sadly in unison with the life I look forward to. How long I sat thus, I know not, but my father uttered my name reproachfully, and I became conscious that both himself and Zavala were observing me; and Don Pedro gave me such a look! it thrills to my soul to remember its expression. I felt as if withered by it, and I burst into tears.

"My father said something of my criminal indulgence in dreams which wrecked my health and destroyed my spirits. He mentioned Charles Russell's name; I know not what he said of him, and I made no answer; but I felt that I have not yet conquered the violent emotions which once threatened to madden me.

"This will not do; I must cease to dwell upon his image. Yet how effect it? There is not an event in my past life with which the memory of Russell is not entwined. They tell me time will blunt my feelings, and I shall yet be happy; and then they dwell on his vast possessions—the splendour that will always surround me. Can gorgeous robes conceal desolation of heart from their wearer?

"Yes; I shall be *splendidly* married, but beneath the glare of my position, one bitter and corroding remembrance will ever rest. The cup of my pleasure may bring satiety, but not forgetfulness. Oh, I *fear* this cold, cruel heart, to whose mercy I am about to trust my future life."

CHAPTER XXII.

The affairs of Col. Alwin were assuming a smiling aspect, and in fancy he beheld himself the possessor of all he grasped at. The morning brought with it despatches from the East, announcing to him that several gentlemen of wealth and influence had secretly embarked in his cause. Many young aspirants for fame and fortune were ready to join him so soon as the standard of rebellion was raised, while the elder members of the confederacy confided in his brilliant talents and well-known energy of character, for the success of his scheme.

He had used every pretext to augment his resources and multiply his adherents, without drawing on himself the suspicions of government. It was remarkable that many of the most powerful of his own party knew nothing of the ultimate object of the expedition. Some imagined that the Western States were to be the theatre of his glory and dominion; while others were impressed with the belief that the

Spanish provinces, then in a state of open revolt against their government, were to be the seat of his kingdom.

On this morning he was alone in his own apartment, with letters and papers scattered over the table before him. He finished their perusal, and threw himself back in his chair with a smile of varying expression on his lips. There were pride, gratification, and scorn, each contending for the mastery, as his eye wandered over the documents before him.

"I have them now," he muttered, "pledged to support me, and my career shall astonish the civilized world. Let me see: power, empire, renown, what more shall I require? Humiliation to *him;* ay, 'twill be sweet beyond all the rest. I will wrest from his grasp the fairest portion of the broad lands he has acquired by purchase; and when the history of our common country is written, he shall go down to posterity as the circumvented President, who had his own treachery thrown back against him, with overwhelming interest, by the man he had basely injured. Time will give that mighty valley all it can require to render it even superior to the Atlantic States. Population, wealth, refinement, will soon follow the establishment of a new government, and I will be the kingly ruler over all."

His eye rested on a pile of letters which had been pushed to one corner of the table, and he laughed scornfully as he continued—

"Those are from my lukewarm friends, who stipulate for the safety of their country. Ay, as safe she shall be from me as is the caged bird from the swoop of the eagle. So long as she can defend her rights, let her do so; but so soon as my power overbalances that of the United States, we will see which shall be lord of the ascendant. Fools! do they think me one to hesitate about a silly prejudice in favour of fatherland, when so much is at stake?"

A slight tap on the door interrupted his meditations, and Isabel petitioned for admittance. He smoothed his brow, and bade her come in.

It was not the least strange part of this singular man's character, with what chameleon-like rapidity he could change his mood. To have seen him in his solitary and ambitious musings, one would have said, that nothing like human feeling ever softened that heart, seared by his devotion to self-interest; yet this was not so. His daughter he loved with ardent affection, and Isabel could not remember ever having received a harsh word from him. To Julie, also, he had been indulgent and affectionate, and, until of late, had never thwarted her inclinations. There was tenderness in his nature; but circumstances in his early life, had repressed, and in a great measure destroyed it. There was a spring of bitterness in his heart, which frequently overflowed on the whole human race; but, even at such moments, the presence of Isabel was like oil to the troubled waters of his soul: again he felt himself a man and a father, and suffered the sweet conviction to enter his soul, that his path was not uncheered by affection, and that of the most hallowed description.

Isabel looked wan and spiritless. As she stood beside him, and twined her arms around his neck, he kindly inquired—

"Why droops my sweet flower? Are you wearied with the monotony of your present existence? Never mind, my daughter, you shall be brilliantly repaid for your present rustication."

"Oh, no, dear father, it is not that," she quickly answered. "Just now I prefer retirement, but I am sad for our dear Julie. She has become a mere shadow; and in spite of my remonstrances, she walks the floor of our room throughout nearly the whole night. Indeed, if you persist in completing this union, it will kill her."

The brow of Alwin darkened, and he inquired—

"Did Julie say anything to you in reference to our last interview? Has she, since that time, expressed a wish to retract from her present engagement?"

"Alas! no. She only weeps when I entreat her to confide in me: so suffer me to prevail on you to postpone this odious marriage, or break it off altogether. She answers sometimes in a tone that wrings my heart. 'No, Isabel, I have promised, and it is my wish to obey my father, although that obedience should break my heart. He has reasons of which you can know nothing, for desiring this connection with Zavala.' Then she turns away so sadly that I weep to see her."

Col. Alwin listened attentively, and it was some moments before he replied.

"She is quite right, Isabel. It is of more importance to me than you are aware, to be connected with Zavala by strong ties, or I would not thus urge Julie to accept him. After all, she cannot do better in a worldly point of view, than to marry him. Russell is now entirely out of the question, and any other than he would just now be as distasteful to her as she finds Don Pedro. If it were in my power, I would defer the marriage until she has schooled her heart into forgetfulness, and could approach the altar with him without such repugnance; but that is impossible. She must be ready on the day appointed, for I have pledged my word that she shall give her hand to Zavala before we leave this place, and many weeks cannot now elapse before we depart."

Isabel sighed and said no more. She felt the utter uselessness of attempting a further appeal, and she left him to his ambitious dreams, to return to the suffering victim about to be offered up at their shrine.

While events were thus occurring, fraught with the destiny of others, all were so much engaged with their own feelings and interests, as to have few thoughts to bestow upon the young student. Occupied with Julie, Isabel had relinquished her walks with Graham, and no one remarked the increased paleness of his cheek, nor the deep melancholy which had settled over his brow. Letters from his early home had reached him, which appeared to augment the depression that preyed upon his mind.

It was that brief but delightful season, known as Indian summer, and Graham frequently passed whole days in the woods, their melancholy brightness well according with his state of mind. Isabel had been with Julie during the day, but towards the close of evening, she threw her bonnet on, and with something of her former buoyancy of step, sought the forest depths. She had not proceeded far, when she saw Graham listlessly reclining at the foot of a tree, with a letter grasped in his hand, though his eyes were bent on vacancy. He started, as her light step rustled the dead autumn leaves, and a gleam of something like pleasure lighted up his wasted features. He arose, and immediately joined her.

"This is indeed a pleasure, Miss Alwin. One I had not dared to anticipate. I wished to see you once more, to tell you all that is in my heart, before we part for ever."

"Why speak of parting, Mr. Graham? I fear you have again suffered yourself to become a prey to sadness, since I have neglected to point out to you the sunshine which may still belong to your lot."

"Say rather, why should I linger, bound as the victim to the funeral pyre that consumes him? Some are doomed to wretchedness from their birth; the stamp of sorrow is placed upon them while yet in the cradle; and vainly do we endeavour to struggle against our destiny."

"*We!*" repeated Isabel, smiling; "I hope you do not mean to say that you are one of those unfortunates on whom fate has set its fatal seal? You—so young—so full of life—believe me, there is much for you yet to enjoy."

He did not appear to hear her last words, but muttered as if unconscious that audible sounds escaped his lips—

"Yes—I am young, but there were two of us—one as young, and far more fitted for happiness than I have ever been; yet the spoiler came, and——Oh, God! that I could have done it!"

His eye flashed wildly, and his whole countenance was convulsed with emotion. Isabel shrank back affrighted, but he seized her hand, and said—

"Tell me, Miss Alwin, are you a fatalist?"

"No—no—how can one give credence to such a terrible belief? It is opposed to the divine characteristics of our Creator, to suppose that we are fated to do or suffer evil, without the power to avert or fly from it."

"Then I am accursed," said he, dropping her hand, and speaking in the low concentrated tone of deep emotion, while drops of agony gathered on his brow. "Yet, tell me—in mercy say, do you believe that a man is accountable for what he does when reason is dethroned? When the strong throes of anguish have awakened a demon in the heart never more to sleep, and which, vulture-like, gnaw into it, until every soft and merciful feeling is extinct?"

He stood before her with his hands clasped, his eyes glaring on her as though his existence depended on her answer. Isabel was

startled and astonished at this ungovernable burst of feeling, from one hitherto so calm and self-possessed. He had often spoken of his sorrows, but always without passion. Anxious to soothe him, she used many arguments to calm his mind, and gradually his face resumed its usual expression. In reply to some remark of hers, he said—

"Have you no faith in the belief that 'coming events cast their shadows before?' If not, why is the cheek paled, and the heart saddened, we know not wherefore? Whence arises the vague terror which sometimes falls on us, without any visible cause? Who has not felt the blood chilling in the veins, and the mind quailing before some unknown and mysterious power which omens the dark events concealed in futurity? Even in the trifling events of every-day life, this presentiment is often acknowledged—though it is not always portentous of evil. When I first placed my foot upon the soil on which we stand, I felt the conviction within my soul that some one here was to influence the remainder of my life. I beheld *you*, and my heart acknowledged you as its fate. I love you, Miss Alwin, as only such as I can love—with the fervour of a heart that is always in extremes. I do not ask for love in return; as one might worship some bright star, far and unattainable, I adore you. 'Tis not for such as I, blasted, withered by a curse as heavy as ever man endured, to aspire to the love of an angel. My spirit is too weak to claim affinity with yours, and if there be less of gloom within and around me, than in former days, I owe it to the influence of your association. A bright spirit have you been to me, casting sunshine and hope into a blighted heart. Listen to my story, Miss Alwin, and, if you can, forgive my presumption in daring to love you. Will you hear me?"

"I will; but you are agitated and suffering—defer the relation until you are calmer."

"No—now, or never—I can suffer; it is nothing now to me. It is the punishment I deserve. But promise me one thing, Miss Alwin; say that when you have heard the terrible revelation I am about to make, you will not drive me from you—you will still suffer me to linger near you, to hear your voice, and to gaze upon the face which has ever looked kindly on me. Believe me, to the desolate in heart, that is a sad gratification; one which the happy can know nothing of. Will you promise?"

There was incipient insanity in the wildness of his eyes, as he took her hands, and pressed them to his lips and heart with an energy that terrified her.

"If you will be calm, I will promise."

"Ah, that is kind—is right—like yourself. But let me sit at your feet a few moments, and drink into my very soul the softness of your glance. Oh, Isabel, you will be loved by many, but none will love as I love you. The happy could not, for intense feeling is never happy Let me, for a few brief moments, enjoy the consciousness

of still possessing your esteem. One of the master spirits of the age has said, 'that each of us, the best as well as the worst, hides within him something—some feeling, or some remembrance, which, if known, would make you hate him.' I feel the truth of this misanthropic remark, in its application to myself; to others, I dare not apply it, for they have not one burning secret weighing them to the earth, and darkening the brain with anguish which wastes the very springs of life. You, Isabel, can never feel its truth; but to me, 'tis not the language of exaggeration. I know that I deserve your scorn —that I merit the contempt of all the pure, the gentle, and the lovely. But enough of this; I will rend the veil from the past, and show you all the desolation of my lot. Perhaps your kind heart may forgive what I can never forget. But it is a long story; sit under this tree, and hear me."

The roots of the tree had grown up, and formed a rude seat, on which Isabel placed herself, and Graham threw himself at her feet. His face was ghastly, and his matted curls clung to his pale brow. Isabel remembered that when she had joined him, a deep hectic spot glowed on his cheeks, and she shuddered at the change. As she listened to him in the shadowy light, heard the heart-stirring story he was relating, and marked those strangely gleaming eyes fixed on her own, a feeling of awe crept over her, which, as he proceeded, deepened into horror.

"I am the last of my family, and in me will perish a miserable and accursed race.* I may well say accursed; for of four generations, all, *save one*, have died maniacs, and all have died young. My sister and myself were the only children of our parents; we were left orphans at an early age, and possessed of considerable property.

"I am a native of Georgia, though I have little of the appearance of a southerner. We resided with our guardian—a kind but indolent man, whose injudicious indulgence fostered the natural violence of my temper. It has been the misfortune of my life to be too morbidly sensitive to the opinions of others; I have been rendered miserable for a day, by some trifling breach of conventional etiquette; think then, what misery must have been inflicted on me, by what I considered a disgrace!

"My sister bore the sweet, and, to me, charmed name of Madeline. We were devoted to each other, and language cannot express to you the tenderness of my affection for her. In my fiercest moods, a word from her soft voice could tame me, and bring me to her side!

"I had barely attained my sixteenth year, when a suit was brought against our estate, which involved the whole of it. The decision was against us, and on the day it became known to me, I wandered around our home many weary hours, dreading to return to my darling sister, with the announcement of our ruin. I will describe the scene of our meeting, Miss Alwin; for it stands out in bold relief, amid the darkness that surrounds it.

* This story is literally true.

"Enter with me the rustic cottage which we called our home—which had been the dwelling of our fathers from the first settlement of the country. It was summer; two lofty willow trees drooped gracefully over its roof, and the bright sunshine was dancing over the green lawn that lay around my sylvan cottage. It was a fitting abode for love, and youth, and beauty; for exquisite taste had distinguished the ancestor who erected it. I stood without the home I had recently claimed as mine, and thought with bitterness, that it had been unjustly wrested from me—that strangers would dwell where I had been born, where I had played in infancy; while its rightful owners were thrust forth into the wide world, a pair of young and hopeless orphans.

"The windows were open—look with me into the gracefully furnished apartment, and see if the presiding genius is as lovely as the mistress of this fair domain should be. A table is in the centre of the room, strewed with books and drawing materials; a guitar is thrown carelessly on a chair, and some leaves of music scattered on the floor. A girl is arranging flowers in a vase; she is very young—fourteen summers can scarcely have passed over that fair brow, yet the premature development of a southern clime has given to the rounded figure a perfection rarely found among girls of eighteen in a more northern latitude. Her features are regular, and delicately cut, with eyes of Heaven's own azure, lips of the hue of the scarlet berry, and hair of a bright gold colour. She is attired in a loose dress of snowy muslin, fastened up the front with knots of pink ribbon. Her hair is hanging in silken ripples below her waist, and as the light gleams on those shining curls, 'tis not difficult to fancy her a radiant image of beauty, sent from heaven to show the children of earth what guise the angels wear!

"I can see her—I can see her," he exclaimed, starting up, and tossing his arms wildly above his head. "That whole scene is before me. Day and night it haunts me, except when I am sitting beside you, and listening to the magic tones of your voice. Speak to me—speak to me now, and drive the past from me."

"I will speak—but what can I say to calm you?" said Isabel. "Pray, stop this narration; it agitates you too deeply. For my sake, if not for your own, refrain from speaking of the past."

"The past! Would it were the past, but to me it is the ever present. Permit me to go on; I think I shall be happier after you know all. I will recal those scenes once more, and then endeavour to forget; for memory is killing me. See," and he held up his thin white hand—"it is almost transparent; you will not have to bear with my love and waywardness much longer."

He covered his face with his hands, and remained silent some moments. When he again spoke, his voice was low and sad, but quite composed.

"I stood beside the window, looking in at my sister. An expression of listless weariness was on her countenance, and she lingered

over her employment, as though seeking to cheat the lagging of time. She placed the last rose in her vase, and turned to her guitar; a few wild notes, full of sadness, fell on my ear, and she warbled a farewell to her home, composed by herself, in anticipation of the very catastrophe I came to announce. I sprang through the open window, and clasped her to my bosom.

"'Edward,' said she, 'I have waited long for you. Speak—tell me in a word—are we——' She could not finish, but concealed her face on my breast. Bitter, burning tears fell over her, as I whispered—

"'We are homeless, my sister.'

"She raised her head and looked around the familiar apartment, which had been the scene of all her childish joys; then fixing her tearful eyes on my face, she said—

"'I can leave all—the old trees, the flowers I have nursed, with few regrets, my brother, for you will go with me; but oh, my beloved Edward, how can I bear to be a clog to your future efforts? Helpless indeed I am; too young, and too ignorant to be other than an incumbrance to you.'

"'Say not so,' I exclaimed. 'Without you, I should have no object in life. I am older than you, and can easily gain a subsistence for us both. You, my dear Madeline, I regard as a sacred bequest from my mother. On her death-bed, I promised her never to forsake you; and from this hour I devote the whole energies of my being to your service. I call on the Father of the fatherless, the orphan's friend, to hear my solemn vow. I will seek your happiness before my own, and never, under any circumstances, will I suffer estrangement to come between us.'

"I gave up the profession of medicine, which I had studied as an amusement; and as the earliest method of acquiring the means of living, I applied for a clerkship in a large mercantile establishment, the principal of which had been an intimate friend of my father.

"So long as health and strength were granted to me, I was resolved that my sister should never feel the change in our fortunes. For myself, I cared little—but I could not bear that the bright being who had twined herself around the very fibres of my heart, should weep over our changed prospects, that the sordid cares of life should destroy the elastic buoyancy of her young heart. The devotion I felt for a being thus thrown entirely upon me for protection and support, was deeper and holier than the ordinary affection of a brother for the most fondly loved sister. She was the only near relative I possessed on earth, and from infancy had been my pet and plaything. We had grown up together, and I had watched the gradual unfolding of the beautiful child into the lovely and intelligent girl, with that quiet glad affection which we feel for those who are dependent on us for their pleasures or improvement.

"I removed Madeline to the city of Savannah, and placed her in a school near me. At the expiration of a year, my employer made

an advantageous offer to me to visit England, and attend to some business which demanded the presence of one familiar with the affairs of the firm. I thought of Madeline, and hesitated; but M. Lagarde silenced my objections by saying that his house should be a home to my sister during my absence, and as long after my return as we might wish. Madeline was very much attached to Madame Lagarde, for she had manifested much kindness towards her, and there seemed to me nothing objectionable in this arrangement. My sister urged me to accept the offer; she dreaded to part from me, but she could not bear the thought, that for her sake I should decline a mission which promised to be so advantageous to myself. I yielded; but at the last moment, when she clung convulsively to me, and wept with that anguish which was only a presage of all she was to suffer, before my protecting arm again encircled her, I was near abandoning all hope of fortune, which must separate me from her.

"I left her, and she became an inmate in a new home. This portion of my history I lightly pass over. I transacted the business confided to me, to the satisfaction of all concerned, and embarked for my native land. The ship was wrecked, and reported in the papers of the day as lost, together with the crew and passengers.

"I escaped—how, it is needless to relate. In two years from my departure, I again stood upon my native sod, and learned the indelible disgrace which had fallen upon me in my absence. The hereditary madness of my family attacked me, and for months I was kept in confinement. The cause—the cause was this: I will give my sister's history as she afterwards related it to me herself.

"Madeline was at first charmed with her hostess; softness and elegance of manner, united with loveliness of person, rendered Madame Lagarde a universal favourite. It was only those who lived intimately with her, who knew that her brow could contract, and those smiling lips utter the most cutting sarcasms to another. Poor Madeline was at first frightened and shocked, by a display of temper called forth by the most seeming trifles; but she soon learned that to be beautiful was an offence which Madame Lagarde could not forgive. In admitting the young orphan into her house, she had not dreamed of a rival; she had considered her too young to attract the attention of those who frequented her splendid entertainments. Unfortunately for my sister, such was not the case; she was sought after, flattered, worshipped by the idle crowd. But for the unhappiness of her position, she might have been intoxicated by the offered incense, but the memory of her absent brother appeared to be a charm which prevented her from yielding to the influence of surrounding circumstances.

"She heard regularly from me, until I set out on my return. About that time, the only son of M. Lagarde, by a former marriage, returned from college. He was handsome, insinuating, and unprincipled. Fascinated by Madeline's rare beauty, he paid her the

most unceasing attentions. She insensibly became interested in his conversation, and a few months found the enthusiastic heart of my sister completely absorbed by a passion for this soulless egotist. Unhappy Madeline! her love was the poetry of passion, and her romance too bright a tissue of high-wrought hopes, to bear the rude contact of reality, even had the man she confided in been as true and honourable as he was base.

"Objections were urged on the score of the malady known to be hereditary in her family. Lagarde pleaded for a private marriage, and the infatuated girl consented. She clandestinely left the house of her protectors with her husband, and accompanied him to the coast, where he had provided a secluded summer residence for her. There the hours were winged to the fondly attached wife. Lagarde was the most devoted of husbands, and Madeline acknowledged that the presence of her brother was alone wanting to complete her happiness. Many months passed without hearing from me, when a paper accidentally reached her containing an account of a shipwreck, attended with entire loss of life to all on board. A list of the passengers was given, and among them was my name! She was conveyed insensible to her apartment, and for many days was unconscious of all that surrounded her: in her delirium, the only object which presented itself to her fancy, was her brother struggling with the rushing waves, and the gurgling of the waters stifling his last sigh.

"When she recovered, she looked on her husband, and reproached herself with her forgetfulness of the companion of her infancy. She felt that she had suffered another to engross her heart, while her brother had lost his life in seeking to acquire wealth, which she knew was principally valued for her sake. She yielded to the indulgence of melancholy, and vain were the efforts of Lagarde to arouse her from grief. Even the birth of a son, as lovely as herself, could not prevent her from dwelling on the recollections of the past. She called her boy by my name, and for hours would sit beside him gazing on his infantile features, and bathing his fair brow in the tears which silently flowed over her pallid cheeks.

"Truly it has been said, 'that man's love is of man's life a thing apart.' While glowing in youthful beauty with the vivacity of an unbroken spirit, Lagarde had found the fair orphan irresistible; but in illness and sorrow, his affection began to flag. He became weary of his home—of the seclusion in which they lived—in fine, his inconstant heart had ceased to love the being whose very helplessness and dependence would have been an additional tie, to one possessed of a noble or generous nature.

"He at length absented himself from home for weeks at a time, and each absence was lengthened, until Madeline was aroused from her sorrow to find herself a neglected, almost an abandoned wife. To one of her temper, this conviction brought unmingled despair. Self-destruction appeared her only refuge from misery; but she

looked on her child, and the thought of his desolation determined her to live.

"One evening she sat at her window watching for the return of her truant husband, when a gentleman on horseback approached, and she rushed out to meet him, deceived by the twilight into believing it to be Lagarde. He was a stranger—a cold, stern man, who regarded her with an expression she could not understand.

"'Is this the dwelling of Miss Graham?' he inquired.

"'No, Sir,' replied Madeline. 'Not of Miss Graham, but of Mrs. Lagarde. Graham was formerly my name, but I now claim that of my husband.'

"'Your husband! Ah, how?—that is by courtesy, I suppose. You must be aware that Mr. Lagarde has another wife living, wedded to him while at college, and unquestionably his lawful wife.'

"This man evidently believed that he was relating nothing new to the unfortunate girl he addressed, or it would not have been in human nature to deal such a blow in so offhand, careless a manner. My sister heard no more; she fell without sense or motion at the stranger's feet. Several days elapsed before she could summon sufficient composure to see him again. He was a lawyer commissioned by him she had believed her husband, to see her and communicate the fact of his first wife having claimed him. He warned her that a suit would be useless, as their union had never been a legal one; he had cruelly imposed on her credulity and inexperience. He offered her the cottage in which she resided, and an annuity sufficient for her support. Her child he would take and educate, so soon as it was old enough to be separated from her. Such was the man on whom she had lavished the untold wealth of deep feeling! Such the being by whom she had believed herself beloved! Selfish, unfeeling, unmanly, he had forsaken, and then insulted her!

"Rising from her seat she took her child in her arms, and said to him who had borne these proposals—

"'Return, Sir, to your employer, and tell him that, although ruined and abandoned by him who should have been her protector—though deceived where she had most fondly trusted, Madeline Graham is yet too proud to owe to him the support of herself or her child. She scorns his insulting offers, as she despises him who could make them. Go, Sir; I am young and helpless, but the Father of such will enable me to provide for my unhappy babe.'

"She would not listen to the persuasions addressed to her by the messenger, but left that evening for the city of Savannah. She sold a few jewels which had belonged to our mother, and under an assumed name struggled to support herself and infant by doing fancy work, in which she excelled.

"When I heard this history, I swore in the deepest recesses of my heart to pursue Lagarde to the uttermost parts of the earth to

obtain atonement. On my arrival in Savannah I claimed what was due to me from his father, and on hearing of it, the coward precipitately left for a northern city, in which he pretended to have urgent business. I followed him; with madness seething in my brain, and a fiend's grasp upon my heart, I tracked his steps. I was not a good shot; this I determined to remedy, and every afternoon I stopped an hour before night and practised shooting at a mark until I had acquired such skill as to snuff a candle without extinguishing it.

"My victim went from place to place to evade me, but I was unwearied in my pursuit. We at length met; it was in a public garden in New York. His wife was leaning on his arm, a young and lovely woman, but not to be compared with my matchless sister. He looked harassed and miserable. I did not then accost him, but pulling my hat over my brows, I followed him to his hotel. His wife left him at the door, and he turned in another direction. I still went on, though he walked with great rapidity, as if seeking to dissipate gloomy thought by quick motion. We reached the suburbs of the city, and he at length paused beneath the shadow of the trees. It was a retired spot, and suited my purpose well. I laid my hand on his shoulder and spoke. We had met once before, when we were both boys. I had not forgotten him, but in the emaciated, soul-stricken being before him, he did not recognise the brother of his victim.

"'What do you want? Who are you?' he inquired.

"'Let these answer you,' I replied, drawing my pistols from my bosom.

"'I do not know; I do not understand,' he stammered, while the livid hue of fear spread over his features.

"'Wretch, catiff! you see Graham before you! Let the sound of that name freeze your craven life-blood! Take your choice of these weapons; one or the other dies before we leave this spot. God will be with the avenger.'

"He attempted to expostulate; he even entreated me to spare his life, but I would listen to nothing. He looked anxiously around, but no one was near. I will not repeat to you all we said, Miss Alwin, lest you should think me less of a man than a demon; but remember my provocation, and be as lenient as you can. At length, with the courage inspired by despair, he grasped the pistol. I named five paces as the distance; we fired, and I left the spot a murderer!'

"I fled from the city before it was discovered, and reached Savannah in safety. I possessed a few thousand dollars, gained by my trip to England, and this sum was placed in the hands of a merchant in that place, and the interest secured to me a small independence.

"I have related my sister's history to you, Miss Alwin, as I afterwards heard it from herself; but until my return from the pursuit

of Lagarde we had not met. A mutual friend had informed me of the particulars of the pretended marriage, but he did not know what name she had assumed, nor her place of concealment. I would not wait to discover her, but left instructions with him to use every effort to do so. On my return to his house, I found her there.

"She fainted upon my breast; and as I bent over her, I saw the ravages suffering had made in that young and elastic frame. Oh, Isabel, you cannot imagine my feelings at that moment. I had escaped the dangers of shipwreck and storm, to find my hopes crushed to the earth; my sister, in the early dawn of life, thus trampled on—ruined; myself, an outcast, with the stain of blood upon my hand. Wretchedness must henceforth be our portion.

"For hours Madeline would sit beside me, endeavouring to look cheerful; to speak in her former tone. In vain; the spell was on me, and my demon would not be appeased. We removed far from our former home, and I fancied that I might be happy if my sister's child had not been constantly near me. He was a miniature image of his father; and I felt, when his baby hand accidentally touched me, as if a serpent had darted its fangs into my flesh.

"One day—one dreadful day, I received letters from Savannah, informing me that the merchant in whose hands my funds were placed, had failed, and the whole of it was lost. This blow severed the last cord that held me to the shadowy light of reason, which for months had kept me from raving insanity.

"Madeline was not well—she was sleeping on the couch in her room—her child was fretting, and as I looked on them, and thought of the misery to which she would awake, I thought it would be mercy to take her life. My health was too completely shattered to permit me to undertake any employment—I knew that Madeline was sinking into a premature grave, a prey to melancholy. Already forsaken by the world, she had no other reliance than her penniless, half-mad brother.

"I speak calmly, Miss Alwin, but if you could look into my heart, and see the fire that is consuming it, you would shrink back appalled. The fable of the vulture preying on the heart is with me a reality.

"Madeline was lying there, with her long hair hanging over her pillow, and sweeping to the floor. I looked on her wan countenance, and thought of my vow to my dying mother. I had promised to prefer her welfare to my own, and always to promote her happiness. There was now but one way to save her from penury, want, and sorrow, greater than she had ever yet known. I felt that I was losing all control over myself, and I tried to leave the room—but I could not—some terrible influence, I could not resist, held me spell-bound. I played with the curls of that beautiful hair—I wound them around my fingers—I caressed them fondly, and then——

"Stoop down your head, Miss Alwin—lower—lower yet, that I may whisper it in your ear. I wound that golden glory around her throat, and, spite of her struggles, her cries, I——"

"Merciful God! you did not murder her!" exclaimed the horror-stricken Isabel.

"Murder! No—no—do not say that *her* blood is on me too! I shed no blood: when it was finished, she looked calm and beautiful as ever; and when the child cried, I tied one of her long fair tresses around his neck too; there they lay side by side—the mother and the child—both cold, and both happy. I then laid myself down on the floor beside her, and sang a lullaby our mother had sung to us in childhood.

"I was arrested—tried, and acquitted under the plea of madness. I was mad for many months afterwards. Since my recovery, I have wandered from place to place without an interest in life, until we met. A distant connexion of my mother heard my unhappy story, and from him I annually received a sum which is sufficient for my support. Recent letters inform me that he is dead, and has bequeathed me a large portion of his vast estates. Every night since I heard it, my sister stands by my bedside, and reproaches me for taking her life.

"You have now heard all, Miss Alwin. Knowing my sad story, can you suffer me to linger by your side? No—I read fear in your eye—aversion for the fratricide. I wanted only this——" and with a shriek and a bound he left the side of the affrighted girl, nor heeded her calls to return. A few moments, and he was lost to view.

Hurrying home, she rapidly related the outline of the tragedy to which she had just listened, and despatched the household in search of the unhappy narrator. He baffled their efforts to discover him, and a night of great anxiety was spent, awaiting his return. The next morning, one of the labourers on the place found him lying on his face in the forest. He was quite dead; the violent agitation of the preceding evening, combined with his previous exhaustion, had proved too much for his weakened frame.

He was buried in a green, sunny spot, and the tears of strangers watered the grave of the outcast.

CHAPTER XXII.

The following letter from Russell to a young friend, will throw some light on his motions after his departure from the island:—

"Ohio, *November* 20, 18—.

"Dear Dalton.—You will perceive from the date of this epistle that I am still in what you term the 'Western Wilds.' In truth, in the present state of my mind I am unfit for society, and just now the companionship of the eternal stars is much more to my taste than the most brilliant assembly.

"I am studying astronomy; but I must confess that a pair of

eyes with their tender darkness, too often arise between my vision and the midnight of heaven.

"You have asked me for my history? It is briefly told: In infancy I was considered as the son of an intimate friend of Col. Alwin, who, dying insolvent, left his son to the protection of a man he had often befriended. My childhood was a bright and happy one; the only chill that ever fell on my spirit was occasioned by my guardian's indifference towards me. My wants were scrupulously attended to, but no word of encouragement ever issued from his lips; no beaming look of welcome ever greeted my appearance. I had nothing to love: my heart was often saddened when I looked abroad and saw other children giving and receiving pleasure from the exercise of their affections; and the conviction would come coldly to my heart that in this bright and beautiful world, there was not a creature from whom I could claim the love of kindred.

"At length Col. Alwin caused a young girl he had adopted to be brought home. She was a child of rare beauty and gentleness. I need not describe her to you, for you have seen Julie de Bourg in the full development of her charms, and know her to be lovely exceedingly. I was no longer lonely; this orphan stranger became to me, even in boyhood, my world. We forgot our mutual isolation in our strong affection for each other. As years rolled away that preference deepened into a passion which must influence the life of both, though at that time we little dreamed that such would be the result.

"As my character developed, my guardian appeared to take more interest in my pursuits; and he frequently condescended to point out to me the career he wished me to embrace, to dwell on the distinctions which at some future day I might aspire to win.

"This fired my ambition, and I resolved to be all that he anticipated. For this purpose I redoubled my attention to my studies, and I was greatly elated when I discovered that I had won his warm approbation. My ideas of the course I was to pursue were vague and unsatisfactory, situated as I was in the family of a man of such eminence as Col. Alwin. Early introduced on that stage, where I was to struggle for a name among the great ones of my country, I had opportunities for observation which were improved with avidity. I am naturally of a speculative turn of mind, and if I could detect the concealed motives of men, I felt a pleasure in dragging them to light. Alas! I found selfishness too often the only inducement to espouse the cause of truth and virtue, and I sickened at the knowledge of human nature I acquired in the school of political life. I wished for power, but it was to benefit the many, not to reward the few. I saw many grasp the glittering bauble, but it was to exalt themselves above the multitude, that they might trample on them with impunity.

"As my knowledge of human nature increased, I turned my thoughts within, and examined my own heart. There I found little

sympathy with those around me; their narrow views and grasping ambition disgusted me; and I sought for something to interest me in the resources of my own mind. I had amassed a vast amount of information for one of my years, but my glowing, bounding heart, felt its utter insufficiency to impart happiness. I felt myself a solitary unit in creation, with no kindred to exult in my success; no eye to brighten as it read of the triumphs I intended to win. I did not then know that my weariness of spirit proceeded from the absence of one who had breathed upon the slumbering pulses of my heart, and aroused it to the first emotions of passionate love.

"I had glowing visions of the grand passion, and my imagination had embodied a creation as bright as the angel forms which hover over us in slumber; but I deemed it impossible that the romantic dream of an enthusiast should ever be realized.

"At this period Isabel Alwin and Miss de Bourg returned from the boarding-school in which they had been educated. Our childhood had been passed together, and our vacations had also been spent at Col. Alwin's country residence; but during the last four years we had not met. I had only thought of them as lovely and interesting children, unconscious that the germ of passion was in my heart, ready to spring into flower, at the first glance from those eyes from which I had so often wiped the tears that flowed for some childish grief.

"Forgetful of the changes which time brings about, I was not prepared for the vision of beauty which stood before me one bright summer day. I was so much surprised that I forgot to welcome her to her home until the tones of her clear sweet voice pronounced my name. I then advanced, and offered my tardy congratulations.

"I beheld the embodiment of all my fancies in a warm-hearted, frank, and affectionate girl, who shed the sunshine of joy throughout the whole household. The servants adored her, and even the superannuated dog would crawl from his kennel at the sound of her glad voice, and look into her bright face with an expression of affection almost human.

"Do you wonder that I loved her?—that I wished for love in return? Yet, do not misunderstand me; I only wished her to regard me in the light of a brother. I knew that Col. Alwin was too ambitious to see this lovely and accomplished girl link her fate with that of his obscure protégé. He expected her to make a brilliant marriage, I was well aware; but I did not think it wrong to endeavour to win her esteem.

"Both she and Isabel appeared to view me in the light of a friend and protector; and engrossed as Col. Alwin was by his public employments, I found myself their constant attendant. I would not think of the danger of such intimacy. I imagined my feelings under my own control; I thought the folly of loving what I could not expect to win, would be a sufficient safeguard to my heart.

"It was long before I discovered the origin of the charm which

rendered my life doubly delightful. There is but *one* who can say, 'thus far shalt thou go, and no farther,' and I daily found my resolution not to love of no avail. In solitude I considered it as madness, and resolved to break the spell which enthralled me; but when I again stood in her presence, I loved her more wildly than ever.

"First love is said to be the most delicious sensation the heart can know. It may be with those who have been fortunate enough to choose one within their reach. I only know that the pain of loving one I dared not aspire to, overbalanced the pleasure greatly. I would not ask myself what the end of this madness was to be? I only felt that I existed but in her presence, and I would not withdraw myself from the delicious intoxication.

"Accident discovered to me what I had made no effort to accomplish—what I had never hoped. It was that Julie was not indifferent to me. Can you wonder that my first emotion was unmingled rapture? But it was speedily succeeded by far different feelings. There was another who offered her the brilliant worldly gifts I so sadly needed; and he was one I *then* thought might become worthy of her. I was led by him to believe that Julie would sacrifice her affections for wealth, and I bitterly felt the impossibility of asking her to stoop from her high estate and link her fortunes with one who could offer her nothing save unsullied honour, and the determination to be distinguished in the future.

"I then had courage to withdraw myself as much as possible from her society, and to make an effort to repress every feeling of tenderness for her. All my caution was useless. One evening we met in the grounds near the island mansion. I joined her, and we wandered there until twilight deepened into night; her spirits were depressed; mine of late had constantly been so. Before the close of our walk I had forgotten everything but my love for her. That love had been declared, and I had drawn from her trembling eyes the confession that it was more dearly prized by her than anything the world could offer.

"My dream of happiness was as brief as it was bright. I cannot explain, even to you, the causes of our separation. I feel that we are severed for ever. Words can never express the wild conflict of feeling that warred in my breast when this conviction came to it. I am now calm, but it is the calm that succeeds the whirlwind. I am unfit at present for anything like social enjoyment, and I have sought the unpeopled *forest*, that I may indulge my sad reveries—my vain regrets; and when they come in such a rush as to sweep away the barriers I have endeavoured to raise against them, my weak complainings shall only be heard by our great mother Nature.

"Yet, I am not entirely alone; my companion is a hunter, and informs me that for many years past he has been a solitary dweller in these wilds, only visiting the settlements occasionally, to procure ammunition. He is evidently a man of education, who in early life has mingled in the active scenes of life, and acquired a polish and

eloquence of manner which ever so long a residence in this secluded spot has not been able to destroy.

"I accidentally discovered his dwelling while wandering in the woods with my rifle on my shoulder, more as an excuse than with any intention of using it. I was benighted, and accepted his invitation to his cabin. There, much to my astonishment, I found a small but well selected library, and I discovered that my host is a scholar, and a man of fine literary taste. I have now remained with him several weeks, and every day finds me draw more closely to this singular man. He has promised to give me his history at some future day, and I anticipate in it a life of adventure and disappointment.

"I am now writing before a huge fire in his cabin, and Leslie is sitting on the opposite side of our rude table, engaged in reading. A lamp is between us, and the light falls on his noble, though sad countenance. He has a tall and finely formed person, and features of a high order of intellectual beauty. When he turns his full dark eyes upon me, it seems as if I can read in their subdued expression the sorrow which has wasted his young years, and driven him from communion with his kind.

"Adieu! When this fit of misanthropy has passed away, you will see me return to my former mode of life; but never again will you see the gay and joyous companion you once knew. I seem in a few weeks to have passed from the flowery domain of youth, with its bright hopes and golden anticipations, to that period in later life when we feel how hollow and unsubstantial is all we seek—when we pursue the bubble reputation, or the more ephemeral blossom, happiness! Once I dreamed of a futurity which the voice of well earned popularity, and the smile of love, were alike to bless. In fancy, I had twined the laurel wreath with the roses of enjoyment, and thus mingled, I trusted that one would be as unfading as the other; but now, the path of ambition has no charms for me; no heart would rejoice in my success, and I abjure it.

"Yours truly,

"CHARLES RUSSELL."

The following lines were added in a scarcely legible hand:

"I have just heard from the island. Oh, woman! woman! who should trust in thee, when thy name is weakness? Julie has consented to wed my bitterest foe—to give her hand to the man who sought my life with a savage ferocity I had not believed in the breast of any human being. I have been to Marietta, and there found the confidential servant of Zavala, who came with a letter from his master to the Rev. Mr. B——. Zavala requests him to visit the island, and perform the ceremony which is to unite this lovely and innocent victim of ambition to the object of her undisguised aversion.

"Until this news reached me, I imagined that I had resigned her; but 'tis only now that I feel how linked with my very being is

this passion—how I have hoped impossibilities. Julie is lost to me for ever! Those words contain the sentence of my life! Farewell, romance, with your train of bright but unreal visions! Farewell to the hope of a happy futurity! The hard and arid path that leads to what the world calls fame, is the only one now open to me, and no motive is left to me to attempt its perilous ascent.

"I will visit the island once more, unknown to its inhabitants, and gaze unseen on my lost idol—I must behold her before she seals her own misery, by wedding one she can never love."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Col. Alwin had made his arrangements to leave the island immediately after the marriage of Miss de Bourg. Accompanied by Fitzgerald and Zavala, he intended travelling through the state of Kentucky, hoping in his progress to add many influential names to the list of his adherents. Dr. Crawford was to remain with the family at Fitzgerald House, and when the spring opened, Col. Alwin's two companions were to return and accompany them down the river to Natchez; from which place, the triumphant Zavala would bear his bride to the bosom of his family.

This arrangement was the most satisfactory one for all parties that could be made, though Zavala demurred a little at so long a separation from his bride. Dr. Crawford was a gentleman of the old school, and though an elderly bachelor, he was extremely fond of female society. Himself and Col. Alwin had been friends from boyhood; they had been college chums, and had entered on the practice of their different professions at the same time. An unbroken intimacy had always been maintained between them, and it was his personal attachment for the man, rather than a wish for change, which had involved the good doctor in Col. Alwin's present schemes. To the ladies of the household, his society during the tedious months of winter was the most welcome that could have been offered. He was amusing without being tiresome, and so perfectly independent in his pursuits, that he placed no restraint on the mistress of the mansion.

The bridal morning was as bright as lover could have desired, and Zavala trusted that the brilliant sunbeams which glittered on the tranquil waters of the Ohio, were an omen of his future life, blessed with the companionship of his beautiful Julie.

With a sinking spirit, and a cheek from which each hour appeared to steal the hues of life, the poor girl had seen the day approach which was to seal her misery. Did her guardian watch that fading form unmoved? Alas! who could tell? Calm, self-possessed as ever, Col. Alwin appeared not to be aware of the alteration in the being he had once seemed to love. He would not see that she was wretched—struggling with memories which clung to her heart with

the weight of despair; while she shrank more deeply from the approaching union, as the time drew near which would give Zavala the right to claim from her the love and consideration of a wife. Don Pedro at first deluded himself with the belief that Julie might yet learn to love him: as if the course he had pursued was not well calculated to destroy every sentiment towards him, save that of unconquerable repugnance. She listened calmly when he dwelt on their future with the impassioned eloquence of affection: and though no smile flickered on her lips, no vivid blush mantled her marble cheek, he at first fancied that she heard him with interest. He mistook the apathetic calmness of despair for the first dawn of affection. Strange, that one who loved, should have been so deceived in the signs of that passion!

But as the time for their union approached, he read her heart more accurately. He then felt that, had she been only indifferent to him, he would have deemed himself fortunate. He understood the ill-concealed aversion with which she accepted his attentions; he saw the cold thrill that convulsed her frame, the icy pallor that overspread her expressive features, when their marriage was alluded to; and his proud, passionate heart, registered a vow to retort on her the exquisite suffering such indications inflicted on himself. He loved her with the savage ferocity which the tiger bestows upon its young; and mingled with this feeling, was a strong dash of hatred, when he recalled the cold scorn with which his overtures had been rejected, until her affection for her guardian wrung from her the consent to be his.

Late in the evening, Julie sat alone in her own room, and the brilliant glare of many lights fell on her person, arrayed in the white robes of a bride. All trace of violent emotion had left her features; they were calm, pale, and nearly as rigid as stone. She looked as if hope, the last refuge of the afflicted, had ceased to throw its halo around her heart, and despair had usurped its place.

Isabel entered with a bouquet of flowers, fresh from the conservatory, which she placed in the hair of her friend. Julie looked up at the mirror, and a deep flush mounted even to her temples; she hastily, almost passionately, snatched them from her tresses, and crushed them beneath her feet.

"'Tis well," she said, "to deck the victim for the sacrifice, but *his* flowers shall never bloom in my hair, when braided to attract his rival. No—no, Isabel—there is sufficient contrast between this pale cheek and gorgeous dress, without bringing nature's blooming offerings to twine around my sad brow."

Isabel remembered that the white rose-buds were gathered from a rare species of that plant, which Russell had brought with him from a French settlement on the river, and presented to Julie on his first arrival at the island; and she regretted much that she had not been more thoughtful.

In the mind of Julie, recollections were entwined with this simple

gift, which it was anguish to recall. She remembered how tenderly it had been nursed—how anxiously she had watched the unfolding of the first bud, a type of their love, she now thought, for it had withered before the leaves were fully unfolded; she remembered it *now*, though, in happier hours, it had not been thought of. The bush was now in full bloom; and how beautiful were the clusters of snowy flowers, how cheerless all within her blighted heart!

As she leaned her head upon her hand, the emotions which swept over her varying countenance so well depicted the bitter struggle within, that Isabel gazed on her with compassionate sorrow.

"Julie"—she at length exclaimed—"my darling Julie, it breaks my heart to see you suffer thus; for my sake, for the sake of all who love you, look less wretched!"

Julie suffered herself to be pressed to the sympathizing bosom of her friend; she then gently extricated herself from her arms, and said—

"Do not quite unnerve me, Isabel. I am calm; you cannot expect me to say that I am happy; for you know I have never pretended to love the man to whom I am about to give my hand. Ah! could Zavala only know how joyless is the heart he wishes to possess, he would scarcely deem it worth the winning."

"Oh, say not so, my beloved girl. He thinks, like all who know you, that your heart is warm and gentle, and he who gains it will possess an invaluable treasure."

"You forget that warm feelings can be chilled, and the heart which has once been scathed by passion, will never again trust to its influence. I know 'tis weak in me thus to repine; but visions which have been cherished from my early youth, are not so easily forgotten. I have made the effort, and could a draught from the fabled Lethe be procured, for the coveted boon of forgetfulness, I would willingly lose all memory of my happy childhood—of the joys of my youth. All—all should go for oblivion to one wild, mad dream of love."

"Time brings healing on its wings," said Isabel, in a low tone; for she did not herself quite believe in her quotation.

"As well may you say to the flower which we carelessly crush to-day, that the sweet air and bright sunshine of spring will restore it to life and beauty. Ah, this emotion must be conquered. Leave me alone a few moments, dearest Isabel, and I will gain a last victory over myself."

Isabel left the apartment, and Julie threw open the window, that the cold night wind might blow upon her throbbing brow, and allay the wild fever which she felt was rushing through her veins. The night was brilliantly clear, and the stars glittered above in all their majestic beauty. With a cold shiver, she was about to close the sash, when the hedge which grew near the window was suddenly borne down, and a figure sprang forward, and stood within a few paces from her. Her first impulse was to shriek, but in another

instant she felt as if turned to stone. Russell stood before her, and he uttered a torrent of reproaches, which alternately caused her to tremble with indignation and melt with tenderness.

Overwhelmed by the thought that he was about to lose her for ever—maddened by the view of her, evidently in her bridal habiliments, he forgot the suffering the poor girl had already passed through—he would not listen to her words of palliation, but continued his strain of passionate entreaty, to come with him even at that hour; he would find shelter, and a fitting home for her, and save her from the fate which menaced her. Julie reminded him of her guardian—the mysterious power Zavala exercised over him, and the stern necessity which seemed to drive her into his arms. In vain; in that hour of anguish, all he owed to his protector—the ties of blood which linked them so closely, were forgotten; he only beheld the woman he adored about to offer herself a sacrifice on the altar of a criminal ambition, and his soul rebelled against the decree which gave her to such a fate.

Moments, which in their lapse seemed ages to the two who stood face to face on that star-lit night, flitted by, and Julie was momentarily expecting the entrance of Isabel. She at length said in a faint tone—

"I cannot go with you, for I should die before we reached a shelter. I feel myself at this moment scarcely able to stand beside this window—I know that I am very ill; if health glowed in my veins—if I were equal to the exertion, I think I could not have the firmness to remain to be claimed by Zavala. Go—go—I beg you—my indisposition must postpone the marriage—and——I hear a step—you must not be found here."

He seized her burning hand, and pressed it to his lips. Emboldened by her passiveness, he drew her towards him through the open casement, and imprinted kisses on cheek, lips, and brow, with frantic energy. Then releasing her, he rushed away, as the door unclosed, and Mrs. Fitzgerald entered. The chilling blast of air which met her caused her to recoil with an exclamation of surprise. As she advanced into the room, she looked around for Julie; a white figure was lying across the deep recess in the window, and approaching, she beheld the unhappy bride, pale as a snow-drift, and nearly as cold. Long, long was it before their efforts succeeded in restoring animation to that drooping form; and when the skill of Dr. Crawford had once more enkindled life within her sinking pulses, it was evident that her mind no longer retained its balance. The good physician ordered perfect quiet, and insisted that her life would be the sacrifice, if any agitating allusion was made before her, in her present state.

The constant wretchedness of the last weeks of her life had wrought their usual effects on a nervous and delicately organized temperament, and she had at last sunk beneath the conflict between a sense

of duty towards her protector, and her unconquerable repugnance to the proposed union.

A burning fever, accompanied by delirium, ensued, and all except Dr. Crawford and Isabel were banished from the sick room.

Long and unwearied was the watch of affection over that suffering couch. The skill of her physician, aided by an unbroken constitution, eventually triumphed over her malady, though it left her in such a state of weakness and depression, that all thoughts of her marriage were for the present resigned. An intimation from her guardian that Zavala insisted on the performance of the ceremony before his departure from the island, threw her into such an alarming state, that a relapse, which Dr. Crawford declared would be fatal, was near taking place.

Zavala made an outward show of yielding with a good grace, but, in his bitter heart, all this was treasured, to be accounted for at some future day, when the power to torment would be securely his. He accompanied Col. Alwin to Kentucky, where Fitzgerald joined them, leaving his wife and her young guests to pass the dreary hours of winter in suspense as to the uncertain fate of all most dear to them.

Julie recovered very slowly, and Dr. Crawford was apprehensive that the depression which clouded her once buoyant mind would eventually destroy the health of his interesting patient.

CHAPTER XXV.

The winter, with its storms and sunshine, passed away, and the river, freed from its icy fetters, flowed dark and turbid on its course to that bourne towards which the thoughts of our little household began to tend. Every preparation for their departure was completed, and they only awaited the return of Fitzgerald and Zavala to commence their voyage. Under the superintendence of the Doctor, their floating house had assumed quite a habitable appearance. One of the largest class of keel boats had been partitioned into rooms, and such furniture as was needful to render them comfortable had been removed thither from the mansion.

The good doctor was chagrined to perceive that a deeper melancholy appeared to have settled on the spirits of Julie since the reception of the letters announcing the speedy arrival of her betrothed. He had trusted to the pleasant spring weather and to change of scene, for a complete restoration to health, but he now feared that little was to be hoped from them, if Zavala was to be the companion of her voyage.

One evening they were all assembled in the parlour. Julie, as colourless as the wrapper which enveloped her figure, was seated in a large arm-chair, reading letters which had just arrived from Col. Alwin. In them he stated his progress through the State of Ken-

lucky, and spoke with sanguine confidence of his ultimate success. Though suspected, he had been able to shroud his plans in such impenetrable mystery, that he eluded every effort on the part of the public authorities to arrive at a knowledge of his true aim. He concluded with the hope that he would soon have the happiness of embracing his beloved children; and he trusted he should find Julie more reconciled to the prospect of a marriage which circumstances more imperiously demanded than ever.

Poor Julie! how her heart sank within her at these words! How rebelliously rushed forth every feeling of her soul to oppose the destiny so perseveringly thrust upon her! She would not accuse him of want of feeling, but she felt that he was unkind.

Dr. Crawford and Mrs. Fitzgerald were deeply engaged in a game of chess, while Isabel glanced over the public journals which had arrived that day, eagerly seeking the name of her beloved father, yet fearing to find there something which might implicate his safety. She soon glided from the apartment, and in a few moments issued from the house equipped for a walk.

She sought the Fairy Glen, and throwing herself on the seat, yielded her soul to the forebodings which filled it. Her father had not hesitated to confide to her the object of his present movements, and she was fully aware of all the dangers that hourly menaced him. What his firm soul regarded with unflinching nerve, caused her nightly pillow to be bedewed with tears. High-souled as she was, capable as her mind was of grasping the whole scope of his plans, she was but a girl, with all the trembling fears for the safety of a beloved one which must ever cling to a woman's heart.

Could Col. Alwin have dreamed of the heart-sickening fears his confidence would bring with it, he would have spared her the suffering. And not alone was her sorrow for the dangers which might overwhelm him: he had taught her to look beyond them to the glorious triumph that he believed would soon crown his wishes. She mourned over the alteration which a few short months had made in his noble nature. She saw each kind and gentle feeling yielding to the stern passion which seemed gradually to be filling his soul, to the exclusion of all other hopes, all other fears; and she grieved with that quiet, passionate sorrow, that persons of deep-toned character feel, yet never betray.

Absorbed in her reflections, she lingered until the deepening shadows of twilight warned her to depart. As she turned slowly away, the rustling of leaves startled her, and her first impulse was to fly, but she checked it, on perceiving the Indian chief emerge from the parted branches.

Outalassa had continued his visits since the departure of Col. Alwin, looking and acting as usual; and the warning given to her by the Indian girl had entirely escaped her memory. The hour and the place now recalled it, and she would have given much to have been nearer the house.

"Is it you, Outalassa?" exclaimed the frightened girl. "In this dim twilight I am almost afraid of my own shadow, and yours has made my heart beat more quickly than usual."

"Outalassa is sorry to make the rose on the maiden's cheek forsake its home. He loves the daughter of the great Chief too well to wish her to be frightened when he follows her footsteps. Many days has Outalassa watched the Glancing Eyes when she was not thinking of him."

"What could have been your motive in watching me?" asked Isabel, moving as she spoke in the direction of the house.

"Stop, lady," said the savage, striding nearer to her, and laying his hand on her arm. "Listen to the words of the Indian, and be wise. Fear not, for the silver light will soon dance on the leaves, and Outalassa will not leave the daughter of the pale-face to go through the woods alone."

He pointed to the long line of rosy light on the edge of the horizon, which heralds the appearance of the full moon.

"I must return immediately, or the family will be alarmed at my absence."

"The dark cloud will not long be over them. Outalassa cannot keep the light of their hearts from them, though his own weekwam is desolate in the absence of the Glancing Eyes."

"What can you mean?" exclaimed Isabel, leaning against a tree, and pressing her hand closely over her heart, to still its agitated pulsations.

The chief stood erect before her: he stretched forth his arm, and pointing to the distant forest, said:

"My people are mighty, and the tribes of my brethren stretch beyond the great waters. The warriors are as numerous as the leaves of the forest, and they are true to their chief. My hunting grounds are broad, and sparkling streams wind through them. There the flowers are as bright and the birds as beautiful, as in the homes of the pale-faces. My brother, the great chief, wished me to smoke the calumet with him, and send my warriors far over to the setting sun to fight his battles. Outalassa will call the white chief brother, and cause the war-whoop to ring throughout the borders, if the Glancing Eyes will dwell in his weekwam."

Isabel listened in breathless astonishment.

"Though your services are, it seems, to be purchased, Outalassa," she at length said, "did you inform my father of the price that was to be exacted for them? Do you for a moment think that he would barter his child for your whole race? Seek him, and tell him what you require, and see what his answer will be. I must leave you. I have already lingered too long, listening to your wild proposal."

Again he arrested her steps, by placing himself in the pathway, in front of her.

"Outalassa's people are mighty, and the white chief, can do nothing without them. Will not the Glancing Eyes think once more?

He of the proud mien and flashing look loves the fair daughter of my brother; why then will the Glancing Eyes suffer him to stand between her and Outalassa?"

Isabel raised her pale face to him, and asked—

"What do you mean? Of whom do you speak?"

"Does not the heart of the young girl tell her who? Outalassa has seen, and he knows."

At any other moment Isabel could have smiled at the misinterpretation the jealous savage had put on her attachment to Russell, but now she was too heartily frightened to smile at anything. The Indian continued—

"Though the services of the red men may not be worth buying, their enmity is strong and deep. Will not the white maiden dwell in the home of Outalassa?"

"No—never—your home is not for such as I am."

"And why not, maiden? The sun is as bright, the air as pure, and the birds sing as sweetly in my forest home as in your own proud halls. The Indian loves the pale face, and will make her happy. Come with me."

While he was speaking, Isabel had contrived to glide past him, and walking by her side, they emerged from the wood together. On turning an abrupt angle in the pathway, the river lay before them, with the placid moonbeams reflected on its smooth surface. In the edge of the land lay the canoe of the chief, with a dark figure sitting in the stern, as immovable as if chiselled in stone.

Outalassa reached forth his arm as if to seize his helpless companion, but darting forward, she eluded his grasp, and fled. The chief bounded after her, and in a moment had overtaken her. She shrieked, and clung to a tree for protection. The Indian threw his powerful arm around her, and releasing her grasp as easily as that of an infant, raised her from the earth and bore her towards the river.

He had proceeded but few steps, when a stunning blow on the head deprived him of sense, and as he fell, Dr. Crawford caught the fainting Isabel in his arms. In another instant he was joined by one of the farm labourers—"Is she safe?" he inquired.

"Yes, but is insensible. I will support her, while you hurry to the river and fill your hat with water. We must not linger here, for I do not know how many of those dusky devils we may have to deal with. The chief would scarcely attempt such an outrage alone. We must get her to the house as soon as possible."

The man brought the water, and a cold dash of it on her brow restored animation to the frightened girl.

"Let us hurry from here," she exclaimed, starting from his sustaining arm. "Oh, dear doctor, how shall I ever repay you for this service! But you have not killed the Indian?"

"No; only given him the headache for a week. His companion there in the canoe may help him off when he finds out we have knocked him on the head for his villany."

Supported by her protector, Isabel reached the house in safety. She learned that Dr. Crawford had become alarmed at her long absence, and sallied forth in search of her. On his way he met the man who accompanied him, at the moment her shrieks resounded through the forest, and directed them to the spot, on which they arrived just in time to rescue her.

Isabel recounted the conversation which had taken place between Outalassa and herself, and Dr. Crawford immediately said—

"This is no longer a safe abode for us. The Indian would never have attempted such an outrage if he had not been prepared to protect himself. Before the dawn of another day we must be on board of our boat, and ready to depart. I will immediately despatch a messenger to Fitzgerald and Zavala, warning them to meet us at the falls of the Ohio."

In pursuance of his orders, the remainder of his furniture was hastily packed, and before midnight the whole family was safe on board of the boat.

As Mrs. Fitzgerald stood on deck, looking back with tearful eyes to the happy home she had left, a light figure emerged from the shadows of the woodland, and with a half terrified glance around her, bounded towards the boat. As she approached more nearly, Mrs. Fitzgerald recognised Innohae; before she could speak, the Indian girl raised her finger to her lip, and said in a suppressed tone—

"Hist, lady—do not speak—those may be in hearing who wish no good to you. As you love freedom, hurry away and snatch your friend from the dangers that encompass her. My race never forgive the indignity of a blow, and the chosen followers of the chief are even now on their way to yonder mansion, which the morning sun will find a heap of ruins. If you would escape yourself, hurry from this shore. Adieu! Take with you the prayer of the Indian maiden that the great Spirit will watch over your safety."

As she ceased, she turned, and rapidly retraced her steps. In great alarm, Mrs. Fitzgerald immediately communicated the warning to Dr. Crawford. By his command, the boat, in a few moments, was loosed from her moorings, and floated down the rapid current.

The whole party had collected on the deck to obtain the last view of the island, when suddenly the stillness of night was interrupted by the startling war-whoop which rang clear and distinct over the quiet waters; and a prayer of thanksgiving ascended from each heart, for escape from the imminent danger which had threatened them. But a few moments had elapsed, when a column of flame shot up against the clear sky, and as the fire increased, the red glare lighted up the whole horizon. The savages, finding their intended prey had escaped, wreaked their vengeance on the house they had left; and as the fugitives looked with blanched cheeks on their recent home, they could see many dusky figures passing before the flames, jumping and dancing around the ruin they had wrought.

Fearing their boat might become the next object of attack, the

men bent heartily to the oars, and gradually the scene faded in the distance: a bend in the river concealed the island from view, and the little vessel floated down the glassy tide, amid the solitude of the unbroken forest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was yet early spring, but it was the spring of a southern clime. The trees were in full leaf, and the birds hopped merrily from bough to bough, filling the morning air with the melody of their songs. The sun was rising, and the mists of morning melted from the face of the river, beneath his glowing beams.

The Mississippi sweeps by Natchez in the form of a crescent, and the two banks possess all the advantages of contrast. On the right, as you descend the "Father of Waters," the fertile plains of Louisiana spread away as far as the eye can reach, either under cultivation, or bearing the luxuriant growth of a southern forest. On the left, the bank rises abruptly from the river to a height of two hundred feet, having a very narrow strip of land at the foot of the precipice. The bluff is in itself beautiful; being composed principally of yellow earth, which contrasts admirably with the green oases that variegate its face. From the crumbling nature of the soil, which yields easily to the violent rains that often occur, huge masses have slipped from the original position, carrying with them, in their descent, the shrubs and wild vines which grew on them; these have formed patches of verdure on the earthen wall, that impart a wildness and peculiarity to the landscape, which is extremely pleasing.

On this eminence Natchez is built; above and below the city the ground slopes away in a succession of gentle hills, covered with the most brilliant verdure; dwellings embowered in shade, with yards gay with the brightest children of Flora, are scattered over these.

Immediately below the town, standing in strong relief against the clear blue sky, are the ruins of the old Spanish fort, a feature in the scene which is now solely indebted to the imagination, and the memory of past events, for any interest it may possess. The most indefatigable antiquarian can discover but little difference between the broken country around, and the grassy mounds which we are told once formed the stronghold, from which issued those who carried destruction among the most civilized and powerful Indian tribe in the territory of the United States.

At the foot of the bluff, a few warehouses had been erected for commercial purposes, and between fifty and a hundred flat-boats were moored in front of them, forming a complete floating wharf. Some event of importance seemed to be expected; for even at that early hour the bluff was covered with groups of spectators, who were watching, with eager interest, the approach of several boats which

had turned the curve above the town, and were slowly descending the river.

A small group occupied the landing; whether they were there to honour the expected arrival by their presence, or to offer resistance to their coming on shore, it was difficult to decide. That they were persons in authority, was evident from the air of importance assumed by the chief individual among them. He was a tall, military looking figure, with the soldierly bearing of one who understood his profession; and the air of assured confidence spoke the high opinion he entertained of himself, as not only fully competent to discharge all the duties of his station, but equally conscious of his claims to be called the handsomest man in the territory he governed; for such was the boast of the acting governor of the territory of the Mississippi, at the day of which we write. A very fine-looking person he certainly was, but very ostentatious in his manner, and his language addressed to those around him, appeared sometimes to puzzle more than enlighten.

"Here, Brutus, hold the bridle of my courser, and see that he does not escape you, and escalade the bluff," he said, as he dismounted, and threw the bridle of his horse to a grinning black.

"Yes, Massa Gubbernor, I warrant I hol' him fas'; me no tink um coarse doe—berry fine hoss—fine hoss as eber I seed. I reckin Massa Gubbernor hab caroused the bojinary dis mornin.'"

The governor only laughed, for the negro was a privileged character, and walked forward to join a group of respectable looking men, who were gazing intently in the direction of the approaching boats.

"Good morning, gentlemen; I am delighted to see you out on this glorious morning, when our homes are to be invaded, our firesides desolated, and the rights of man trampled under the feet of —of this man of daring who now approaches. By the light of this erubescent sun, I swear never to yield to the power of the ruthless invader."

The persons to whom this address was made bowed respectfully, though a slight smile was visible on the faces of several as the Governor spoke; for he was noted for his grandiloquence, and the proclamation put forth by him, commanding the arrest of Col. Alwin, is among the best specimens of it to be found in any language.

"Your Excellency is out early this morning," said a tall, dark man, dressed in a complete suit of Kentucky jean, with a long rifle over his shoulder. "I warrant me the sun has not seen you up before him for a long time until this blessed morning."

"Blessed, do you call it, Sir! A pretty blessing truly it is, to know that those are now floating down the meanderings of this glorious stream, who would quench the vital spark that vivifies our bodies and illumines our heaven-born intellects—would quench it, I say, in a stream of human gore which would cry to Heaven for vengeance. But this daring innovator on the customs of our

republican institutions will not find us slumbering on our post, and he shall find his instant arrest but the dismal harbinger of more severe punishment for his audacious attempt to revolutionize the country, and introduce the horrors of civil war in our borders."

"You are severe, Governor. How do you know that such are Col. Alwin's intentions? He professes merely the design of making a peaceable settlement on the banks of a river now watering a wilderness. This spot has been represented to him as one of the most fertile in the world, and having acquired a title to a portion of it, he naturally wishes to colonize his wild lands. Can you arrest a man for wishing to better his fortunes in a civilized country?

"No, Sir, not for that; but for introducing a body of armed men within my jurisdiction, and for intriguing with those bloody-minded Mexicans, who are destitute of philanthropy for their fellow creatures."

The Governor walked away with a dignified air, and the man muttered—

"You will find him more than a match for you, with all your high-flown words, anyhow, or I'm mistaken."

In the meantime the boats approached more nearly. The deck of the foremost one was crowded with men, who appeared to be anxiously regarding the crowd on shore. Apart from the rest, with his arms folded on his bosom, apparently absorbed in thought, was one on whose brow nature had stamped the seal of command. The expression of his strongly marked features indicated a haughty consciousness of superiority, and his lip curled with bitter scorn, as his eye wandered over the scene before him.

"Our voyage is nearly terminated," said a voice at his elbow. Turning to the speaker, with a bland and peculiar smile, which, like a sudden flood of light, illumined his countenance, he replied—though, as he continued speaking, the expression changed to one of sarcastic bitterness, more in keeping with his general character—

"Yes, 'tis nearly ended, thank Heaven! Another week upon the river would have raised a mutiny among my followers, I am afraid. Here are the very men who were prepared to stand by me to the death, murmuring at their long confinement in an uncomfortable boat, as if they expected the spoils of fortune to be laid at their feet without the trouble of propitiating her smiles. "Out on them," he continued in a stern and bitter tone. "Out on them for a base crew of sordid wretches! occupied with their own trifling inconveniences, unmindful of what I have, and still do, suffer. The agony of suspense—the doubt of ultimate success—the certainty that I am a blighted man if this enterprise fails. All—all these sources of disquietude are not thought of by them for one instant."

"To one of your temper such things are annoying, but they must be borne with," said Zavala. "You can scarcely expect them to enter into all your anxieties; the stake for which you contend is greater than they dream of, and while your thoughts are bent wholly

on the chances of success to a great enterprise, theirs naturally flow in a petty channel, in the absence of all employment."

"It is, indeed, a great stake! Power, fortune, honour, on a single throw! But I shrink not from it; I will be all or nothing. My suspense will now soon be ended, for there is our haven, not of rest, but our theatre of action. There will my destiny be fulfilled—there I shall learn whether the vision of my life is to be realized."

"If your aspirations do not soar too high, I think they are now in a fair way of being accomplished. All things wear a smiling aspect. You should not permit your spirits to sink when our haven is in sight."

"Sink!" he disdainfully repeated. "Ha! you little know me if you suppose my resolution falters as the struggle approaches. No, all the iron in my soul rises to grapple with difficulties, and overcome them."

"What can this crowd mean?" said Zavala. "I am afraid it bodes no good. See, the tall man in the military costume appears to be reading aloud from a paper he holds in his hand, and addressing the people alternately."

"Things do indeed wear a suspicious appearance, but boldness now is our only policy. I scarcely think they can have any suspicion of my intentions, after the successful ruse I practised in Kentucky. I was acquitted there by judicial authority, of any intention to disturb the peace of the government. I submitted to the trial, because I knew there was no proof that could criminate me, and they would not dare to detain me in prison merely on suspicion of harbouring treasonable intentions."

The crowd on shore appeared to thicken as they drew nearer, and a suppressed murmur was heard among them, as the boat touched the landing. The men on the deck of the boat fell back, and Col. Alwin moved forward with dignity, and stepped on shore. No voice of welcome was heard, although his emissaries had been among them for weeks, preparing them for his arrival.

The crowd still preserved its ominous silence, as Alwin raised his hat and bowed to those around him. He had proceeded but few paces, attended by Zavala and a few of his personal friends, when the Governor approached, and laying his hand on his shoulder, said with an air of authority—

"I arrest you, Sir, in the name of the Commonwealth of the United States."

Col. Alwin recoiled a few paces, and demanded in his haughtiest manner—

"What am I to understand from this, Sir? And who are you, who thus offer an insult to a stranger who comes to your shore with peaceable intentions?"

"*I*, Sir, am the Governor of Mississippi," replied that dignitary, with emphasis. "My country has thought me worthy of holding that high post, and by virtue of my authority I repeat that I arrest

you. I turned out myself in order to do you honour, by not intrusting your apprehension to any meaner person."

"Truly, Sir, 'tis a strange evidence of honour you bestow upon me; but you will excuse me if I do not appreciate it as highly as it may deserve. Will you be kind enough to inform me why a stranger is thus molested on his arrival within your jurisdiction?"

"Such were my instructions, Sir, from the Government of my glorious country, which seems to be on the high road to eclipse all the other nations of the world. You are accused of conspiring against her interests; seeking to dim the glory of her escutcheon, by filching from her the brightest emerald in her crown in which to establish a kingdom. This magnificent valley has been purchased with the treasure of our nation, if not with its blood; and every son of the sod feels bound to preserve it to the sons and daughters that may come after him, in that freedom which is the unalienable birthright of all men, as our glorious Declaration sets forth."

While he was uttering this tirade, Col. Alwin's mind was rapidly revolving the unexpected emergency in which he found himself placed, and boldly determining on the best course to extricate himself from so serious a dilemma. He bowed coldly, and said—

"So I am to consider myself as your prisoner, Sir?"

"Certainly, Sir. A prisoner of state, you know; your own lodgings to be your place of confinement, with a slight restriction as to the reception of those who may wish to call on you. Quite a prisoner of state you will be, or rather *a* state."

While they were speaking, Col. Alwin had gradually retraced his steps towards his boat. The men had already received their instructions, in the event of opposition being offered to his landing, and he and his companions had no sooner touched the deck in their rapid retreat, than the boat swung round and gained the open stream. Col. Alwin called out to the Governor—

"Command those persons who crowd around you, to fall back beyond the sound of our voices, and I will enter into terms with you."

The baffled governor obeyed, and once more, obedient to the impulse given her by the boatmen, the craft drew towards the shore. Col. Alwin descended, and held a long conference with him, the result of which was a compromise between them, by which the governor guaranteed the safety of himself and followers, provided Alwin would bind himself to appear before the Supreme Court of the State of Mississippi, during the next term, to answer to charges there to be preferred against him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Letter from Isabel to a young friend.

"NATCHEZ, ——.

"DEAR EMMA.—We are at last at the end of our long journey Tedious, portions of it certainly were; yet I have enjoyed it very much. Until one has descended this mighty river, seen its tributaries flowing from all parts of the valley of the Mississippi, and pouring their waters into its bosom, it seems to me they can form no conception of the vast internal resources of our country, nor to what greatness she is yet destined to attain.

"My father preceded us by a month, and we descended the river very slowly to give him an opportunity to make his début at Natchez before our arrival. Dr. Crawford and Mr. Fitzgerald were our protectors, and the good doctor has been so kind and attentive to Julie that he has quite won my heart. I wrote to you of her dangerous illness and lingering recovery; she begins now to show a little of her former animation, and occasionally a faint smile will rest a moment on her lip, as the doctor utters one of his quaint sallies. Good old soul! the spirit of benevolence appears to have made his heart its permanent abode.

"Zavala found that his presence would be necessary to my father, so he left us at the falls of the Ohio, and Julie was freed from his society for a short time. On our arrival at this place, however, we found him waiting to receive us.

"My father has taken up his abode for a short time with Mr. Belton, an old friend of his, who has been residing in this country several years. The most elegant hospitality is extended to us in his mansion, which is situated about two miles from the town of Natchez, in the midst of a most beautiful country. His family consists of himself and wife, the latter being a quiet, soft-spoken woman, whose voice is rarely heard except in giving orders to the tribe of blacks by whom she is surrounded.

"I have already explored every nook, dingle, and 'bosky dell' in the country for miles around. You know that I am no ordinary equestrian, and mounted on a beautiful and spirited horse, known by the name of the renowned Saladin, I canter over the country, attended by my father or the good doctor. Occasionally, I honour Zavala by allowing him to accompany me. I miss Charles sadly in these excursions, for he was always my cavalier in days of yore. Dear Charles! I would give much to know where he now is, but his name is an interdicted word among us.

"What strikes me as singular, is the broken appearance of this country. The undulating surface on which Natchez is built, is broken into numerous bayous, or, as we would term them, ravines. One might suppose that some terrible convulsion of nature had, in

times long since passed away, caused the earth to rift apart, leaving those wide romantic-looking gaps, which give a variety and interest to the country it would not otherwise possess.

"On approaching the edge of these bayous, the eye is often charmed with the wild and picturesque appearance they present. Trees of large size hang over them, and the washing of the soil causes them to descend, take root on some projecting bank, often leaning forward as if ready to topple down and crush the flowering shrubs and vines which grow below, or wind themselves in festoons on their branches.

"Then the nights here are beyond description beautiful. One does indeed behold the 'sapphire dome of night,' studded with worlds of glory, and the moon seems to fold a mantle of misty brightness around every object. If I could ever yield my soul to the spell of passion, it would be amid such scenes as now surround me; but there is a freedom from care in the light gaiety of such a temperament as mine, which I am not disposed to exchange for the doubts and anxieties of the grand passion.

"My father has given Zavala a promise to visit his mother, and we are to accompany him. Julie shrinks from the projected excursion, and has vainly petitioned to be left behind. For myself, I must own that I feel some curiosity in reference to a certain cousin, which I am anxious to satisfy. She bears the name of Inez, and from Zavala's own confession, is a beauty and a genius. He appears shy of speaking of her, especially in the presence of Julie; and I shrewdly suspect there have been some love passages in his younger years, of which this pretty cousin is the heroine. If so, I pity her, for in spite of Julie's aversion to him, Zavala is not a man to be loved and lightly forgotten, by one gifted with the quick sensibility of genius; by one too, who has probably derived her inspiration from the passion which was unconsciously woven with the thread of her existence. I do not esteem Don Pedro, because he has shown me the dark and selfish side of his character; but there is a fascination about him, which I have seen exercised on those who did not know him as I know him. He can, at times, be generous; I have known him to act nobly, but he is incapable of a high and consistent course of conduct. His passions are perpetually interfering with his good resolutions; and no man, in my opinion, is capable of perpetrating more ruthless baseness to accomplish a favourite end. Were it not that my father holds him by the strong tie of *interest*, I should tremble for his safety.

"Corporal Black has already departed on a mission to Villa d'Esperanza, to announce our speedy arrival to Madame Zavala and her niece. The elder lady is described as a haughty dame, priding herself on the glories of her departed ancestors, forgetting that in a republican country we care little for such things. We profess to believe that one of nature's noblemen is far superior to him whose only claim to nobility lies in his power to find the names of those

who have gone before him, recorded on dusty parchment as the honoured ones of the earth.

"Madame Zavala is so proud of her family name (which was assumed by her husband on his marriage with her), that she does not permit her son to be addressed by any other. She lives in great state on one of her plantations, which is situated on the coast, between this place and New Orleans. Her son hopes much from this visit to his beautiful home; he flatters himself that Julie will regard the owner of so much splendour with less distaste. He will find that to a woman who loves another, this display will be only vanity and weariness of spirit.

"Adieu, dear Emma. I hear my father's voice summoning me to my evening ride. Your friend,

"ISABEL."

Miss Alwin quickly descended, and mounted her spirited palfrey. A graceful woman never appears better than when mounted on horseback, and Col. Alwin gazed with pride on the light form and blooming face of his daughter, as the evening breeze swept back the long plumes of her riding cap, and stirred the curls from the fair brow on which a shade of thought had fallen.

This affection for her was the solitary green spot in the desert of his heart; and when he dreamed of his future triumphs, her brow was to wear the garland he won. He was dead to every softer feeling save his love for that child whose opening mind he had watched over—whose intellect he had cultivated with the most sedulous care.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE brief twilight of a southern sky had already passed away, and the moon reigned undisputed mistress over the scene. The light revealed a stately mansion, embowered in magnificent forest trees. Long galleries extended entirely around the building, both above and below; from them, the ground sloped gradually several hundred yards, and terminated in an abrupt precipice which overhung the Mississippi. Two gigantic magnolia trees interlaced their boughs above the principal entrance, and flowers of every hue bloomed around, making the night air heavy with their perfume.

The house was built in the old French style, with a high arched hall in the centre, and on either hand doors opening into the principal apartments. A spiral staircase in the centre communicated with the upper chambers.

A cut-glass lamp, with a silver reflector, was suspended from the arch, and its mellow light cast softened reflections on the pictures which lined the walls. These represented the feats of many of the renowned knights of Spanish chivalry, and several of them were

executed with a degree of skill that might have pleased the taste of the most fastidious connoisseur.

The floor was covered with oil cloth, painted in a light and delicate pattern, and the draperies of the windows were of embroidered muslin. Heavy high-backed mahogany chairs, with capacious arms, and deeply-cushioned seats, were placed against the walls, and small quaintly carved tables, supporting vases of freshly gathered flowers, in the spaces between the doors.

A sofa had been drawn beneath the lamp, and on it reclined an elderly lady, deeply engaged in the perusal of a small volume, while a black girl fanned her with a superb plume of ostrich feathers. She was a dignified, noble looking woman, with a fire in her eye and a curve on her lip which showed that the pride of a haughty race was undimmed by age.

A mulatto boy entered, carrying a richly-wrought silver waiter, on which lay several letters. He advanced, and presented them in silence to his mistress.

"From my son!" exclaimed the lady, as she glanced at the direction. "Who brought these, Juan?"

"Uncle Black, marm. He stopped at de oberseer's house, to give some orders from de young master, and sent dese up by me. He'll be here 'fore long, marm."

"And my son is on his way home at last, after an absence of three years," murmured Madame Zavala. "I am glad at all events that he does not find this spot so tiresome as to induce him to withdraw himself from it altogether. Once more by my side, with the witchery of *her* smile thrown over his heart, and he will have no desire to leave us again."

But as she read the communication of her son, her brow darkened, and her eye kindled with displeasure. For the first time Zavala informed his mother of his attachment to Miss de Bourg. He spoke of his love for Inez as a youthful fancy which had passed away, and said that his cousin herself was so much of a child when he left her, that he could not imagine she would attach any importance to the words of love which had passed between them.

Madame Zavala was a very haughty woman. She was proud of her name—of the courage and chivalrous deeds of her ancestors; but more than all, of their unblemished honour. No knight of her family had ever proved recreant to his faith; it was reserved for *her* son, the last of his race, to throw a blot on its escutcheon. She thought of Inez, the gentle and devoted being, who had been to her as a fond and affectionate daughter, and her heart felt as if a painful blow had been struck on it. How would she bear to learn that her love was thus coldly cast back upon her heart by him who had spared no pains to win it?

Bitter was the conviction to the heart of the mother who had watched over his infancy and dreamed of his future greatness, that

he was selfish and ungrateful, seeking his own gratification at any expense of suffering to others.

"Where is my niece?" she inquired.

"On de gallery, mam. Shall I call her?"

"No, no; not yet. I must think;" and throwing herself back, she covered her face with her hands.

A voice low, but thrillingly soft, was heard, accompanied at intervals by a guitar. It was a wild melody, and the singer appeared to be herself scarcely conscious of the words she uttered.

As the last note died away, the young musician arose and crossed the gallery, to a spot on which the clear moonlight fell, and that silvery radiance beamed on nothing lovelier than the dark-eyed Inez.

The figure was slightly above the medium height, and most exquisitely developed. Her complexion in brilliancy and softness might have rivalled the rich white of the magnolia leaf. There was no shade of colour on her cheek, but without this charm, a perfect picture of beauty was formed by the finely moulded features—the classic tournure of the head—the exquisitely curved lips—eyes deep and dark as night, and a cloud of raven hair folded above the low broad brow.

She was a creature of imagination and intellect. Reared in artificial life she would have been distinguished from those around her only by her superior beauty, and the genius with which she was gifted; but the solitude in which her existence had been passed, had been to her impassioned soul the nurse of a sensibility as deep as it was dangerous.

The object of fond affection from infancy, she had known no sorrow save that inflicted by the prolonged absence of Zavala; and her trusting spirit saw in that the stern necessity which impelled his ambitious spirit to seek out a career which would give him a place among the master spirits of the day. The romance inseparable from the peculiar bent of his mind, had been fostered by the education she had received. Familiar with the language of her forefathers, its literature early became her study, and for days she would pore over chronicles of the old Spanish knights, and her pale cheek would light up with a transient glow as their chivalric deeds found an answering symphathy in her own heart.

Zavala had seen her grow up beneath his eye, and he took a deep interest in watching the development of this enthusiastic and generous nature. Flattered by the ingenuous preference which even in childhood she betrayed for him, he fancied that he loved her. He gave to her the passing preference of a fickle heart, while the young Inez lavished on him the earnest affection of an ill-regulated, but a most deeply feeling soul. His long absence, his neglect, were alike powerless to win her from her dream of love. She would not permit herself to doubt his affection; she looked into her own heart; it returned but one image, and she could not believe that he who had so long wooed her love, could cast it from him as a worthless gift.

Madame Zavala joined her.

"Inez, my love, I have a letter from my son."

"And he is returned; is it not so? Oh, say when he will be here? Where is the letter? Can I not see it?" and her cheek grew paler than before with intense emotion.

"No, my child. It contains nothing you would like to see. I much fear that Zavala has entered into a strange alliance with this Col. Alwin, with whose family he has been so long."

"Why should you think so? Col. Alwin, as a political man of great popularity, can further his ambitious views."

"His letters of late alarm me. They are strange and contradictory, and I have many fears as to the result of the league which seems to exist between them."

"And what excuse does Zavala offer for not writing to me? Ah, 'tis well my nature is not a suspicious one."

"Have you never suspected anything, Inez? any estrangement—any coldness, during these long years of absence?" asked Madame Zavala, almost fearing the effect her words might have.

For an instant Inez stood before her, trembling with the intensity of feeling that overcame her. The moonlight falling on her marble cheek, made it almost ghastly. When she at length spoke, the words seemed to be forced from her quivering lips.

"Aunt, you know there is reason to fear, or you would not speak thus. Tell me at once—has his heart so exclusively yielded itself to ambition that there is no longer room in it for me? or has—has he given his love to another?"

"My child, I fear that in both he has been to blame. Yet this lady, this Miss de Bourg, has been uniformly cold to his suit; and on finding her inexorable, he may return to the truer and purer affections of his early manhood."

Inez turned towards her, but her cheek was no longer pale, and her eye flashed with all the latent fire of her soul, as she replied—

"And do you think that I—a Zavala—one of your own proud race, could brook so great an insult! Return! never—never, to claim the heart he has once scorned, and trampled on! *If* this be true, and I will myself test its truth, he is free as air to bestow his love where he liketh; and I——Oh, God, if it should prove true!" and she burst into a passion of tears.

CHAPTER XXIX.

It was evening when the carriage containing our party of travellers entered the grounds belonging to Villa d'Esperanza. It was one of the best regulated and most valuable plantations in the State; and Zavala rode by the side of the carriage, pointing out, with ill-concealed pride, the improvements the place had received since his majority

The scene was a novel and interesting one to the visitors. The ground, for miles around, was covered with the green and flourishing cotton, which looked like a sea of emerald slightly crisped by the evening breeze. The negroes were at work in the fields; and the song with which they beguiled their labour came cheerily to the ear. Occasionally an ebony face, contrasted with the gorgeous head handkerchief often worn by the women, would rise suddenly above the high fence, and after bestowing a look on the new comers, and a bow of recognition and welcome on the young master, again disappear.

About a mile from the dwelling stood the quarter, which had the appearance of a picturesque village. There was an open green space, a hundred feet in width, with an avenue of trees planted in the centre. On either side was a row of small white cottages, each one possessing an inclosure in the rear, in which a fruit tree and various kinds of vegetables were cultivated. A number of young negroes, superintended by several aged crones, were at play before the doors.

A short distance from the quarter, was the overseer's house, a modest wooden building painted white, with green blinds and a door of the same colour. A few hundred yards further on, a high arched gate was thrown open by Corporal Black, and they drove into the extensive park which surrounded Villa d'Esperanza. A turn in the road speedily brought them in sight of the lofty pillared porticoes which encircled the mansion. It stood on a slight eminence, and the setting sun was streaming in golden splendour on the walls, and through the bolls of the trees, chequering the green sward with its glowing light. Not a cloud was to be seen, and the rich auburn coloured rays extended half over the heavens, melting in the zenith with the deep clear blue of a southern sky. The first star of evening peeped forth, sparkling like a diamond set in a sea of fire, as it contrasted its pure lustre with the retiring blaze of the monarch of day.

"This is indeed a beautiful place," said Isabel to Zavala. "I am almost moved to surprise, Don Pedro, that you should ever have wished to leave so charming a residence."

"You are a woman, and therefore would be contented in the narrow limits of an agreeable home; but *I* am ambitious of making my name distinguished for something beyond the mere possession of wealth, or the empty boast of the honours of my ancestry."

"A noble desire, if such is really your motive."

"Witness my alliance with your father. Does not *that* prove my sincerity?"

"I imagined that you leagued yourself with him for love, and not for fame," she replied, with a slight glance towards Julie, who was leaning out of the opposite window, absorbed in admiration of the beautiful scene each turn in the road revealed.

"I labour for both united, fair lady; and I have yet to learn that love and fame are incompatible with each other. Though, if I am

as unsuccessful in one as I have hitherto found myself in the other, I shall indeed be unfortunate."

"You wish to purchase love; cannot fame also be bought, without the trouble of a personal exertion to obtain it?"

"I do not understand you, Miss Alwin," replied Zavala, with a flushed cheek.

"I like to speak in riddles; so I shall not explain," she carelessly replied, as she turned her attention to the house they were approaching. She rarely allowed an opportunity of annoying Zavala to pass; his ungenerous conduct towards Julie filled her with indignation, and she had consented to accompany her father in the present visit, with the hope that something might occur, during the visit, to free Julie from his persecution.

Col. Alwin had lingered behind, but as the carriage drew nearer to the house, he put spurs to his horse, and in a few moments overtook them.

"That is your mother, I presume, standing on the gallery," he said to Zavala, "and that fair sylph-like being, is that—can that be your cousin?"

"The same."

"At this distance she appears the very impersonation of sentiment and loveliness."

"You will find her even more than she appears. Inez is no common character."

"How then did you escape love's contagion before leaving these shades? or have you only bowed before another, in the absence of the true divinity?"

"Neither. I have ever loved and admired Inez as my cousin, and as a rare specimen of her sex; but I have not thought of her in the light of a bride." His dark cheek flushed deeply as he uttered the falsehood.

The carriage drew up at the door, and the Corporal threw down the steps with a flourish, and a bow nearly to the ground, as he said—"You is welcome as de flowers in May, ladies, and I hopes you will permit me to require if you has suffered much from fatigue?"

"Oh, no, not at all," answered Miss Alwin, as Zavala assisted her to descend—"We are quite well, thank you, Corporal, and hope that you are quite satisfied now you are at home."

"I carn't say but I is, Miss Isabel. No other place is like de plantation to me."

With another low bow from the Corporal, they passed on. Madame Zavala received them with a union of dignity and well-bred ease, which at once charmed her guests, and made them feel entirely at home. Inez, the timid and gentle Inez, came forward, and her soft musical voice seemed to dwell on the charmed ear of Isabel, long after it had given utterance to the courtesies of the meeting.

Once only did she change colour. Zavala approached her, and with the familiarity of kindred affection, threw his arm around her

shrinking form, and kissed her ruby lips: cheek, brow, and neck crimsoned, a tear glittered for an instant on her long lashes, and then slowly rolled over her flushed face. Her eager glance scanned the two lovely girls before her, and her eye dwelt long and earnestly on the face of Julie. A slight shudder pervaded her frame, as she murmured—

"Ah! me, how beautiful! I no longer wonder that he loves her." Yet with the intuitive delicacy of a pure soul, she veiled her suffering so skilfully that no one, not even her watchful aunt, dreamed of the anguish that convulsed her wrung and stricken heart, destroying in its desolating course the beauty and freshness of a life. She had watched Zavala as he presented Julie to his mother, and the expression of that countenance, which had once been to her as a tablet of divine and unutterable thoughts, told her that she was forsaken.

Utterly at war with the softness and truly feminine spirit of Inez, was the indomitable pride with which nature had gifted her. She could die a martyr to her sufferings, sooner than have betrayed the crushing sense of desolation that fell on her soul, when the conviction came to it, that she was no longer loved by him on whom all the treasures of her heart had been poured without reservation. That brief moment sufficed to blight a life; her existence had been that of the solitary dreamer, who had linked her own bright and beautiful fancies in a chain which bound her irrevocably to her idol. She had no dream for the future, no recollection of the past, in which his image was not paramount. Hers was a woman's love in its deep trustfulness—its utter disregard of self, its enduring strength; yet the selfish and unfeeling Zavala had thrown from him that heart which was so filled with idolatry for him, to pursue one who was made wretched by the gift of his love.

All this strife of emotion was not outwardly visible. Inez looked, moved, and spoke as usual, and even Madame Zavala thought she had unnecessarily tormented herself with fears as to the result of the first interview between those who had parted as plighted lovers, and now met under such different circumstances.

Madame Zavala led the way into the spacious drawing-room, the windows of which all opened to the floor. Their muslin draperies were drawn back, to admit the evening air, which wafted in the delicate perfume of flowers. The floors were covered with fine Indian matting, and the walls were nearly lined with magnificent mirrors. The furniture was rich and elegant, the greater part being of foreign manufacture. An exquisitely carved cabinet, placed in one corner, was filled with rare and valuable curiosities, collected from various parts of the world. A lamp of violet-coloured glass hung from the centre of the ceiling, and though it was scarcely night, was casting its softened light throughout the apartment.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Fitzgerald, as she viewed her graceful figure, reflected on every side—"I could almost fancy myself again in my own beloved home."

She sighed heavily, and Col. Alwin said—

"I trust you do not regret its loss, dear madam. Of late, you have seemed to enter into the spirit of the gaiety with which you have been surrounded, and I had hoped all regrets were lost in the bright promise of the future."

"Ah, I was happy there, though my restless spirit sometimes made me feel that a country life is not my true sphere. I love society—intellectual, refined people, who give a charm to everything in which they are concerned, and of that you know I could command but little in my island solitude, in the heart of a newly settled country. I was willing to live there, because my husband found the pursuits he created for himself congenial to his taste. Except at moments when I think of the sad fate of my beautiful home, I do not regret the change."

"I am happy to hear you say so, madam, as I would not have you retire from the pleasures which court your acceptance."

He then turned to Madame Zavala, and with that courteous eloquence which so strikingly distinguished him, he soon completely fascinated her. He so judiciously mingled flattery with the topics he supposed would most deeply interest her, that Madame Zavala no longer wondered at the influence he possessed over her son.

In the meantime Zavala proposed to the young ladies a promenade around the galleries, for the purpose of seeing the different points of view from them. He offered his arm to Julie, who smiled as she linked hers in that of Inez, and said—

"I will leave Isabel to your gallantry, while I endeavour to become acquainted with your cousin."

"You are very good," murmured Inez, but the expression of her countenance eloquently expressed her willingness to have been spared the courtesy. This was, however, unnoticed by Miss de Bourg, who was deeply interested by the singular beauty and reserve of her companion. As she looked on the fair face, hueless as polished marble, the light nymph-like figure, whose every motion was grace, she thought she had never beheld a creature so formed to claim sympathy and affection. The interest she felt, deepened almost into sadness, when she looked into her spiritual eyes, and fancied she could there read the doom of a being whose feelings had outstripped her years, for Inez was yet almost a child—

> "Her dark eye had misfortune's doubtful presage;
> It had such troubled melancholy loveliness—
> 'Twas like the fabled flower of woe, that tears
> Of sorrow in its cup of beauty bears."

"Have you always resided here?" asked Julie.

"Since I was quite a child. My father died here, and since that time, with the exception of a few brief months spent in Natchez, I have known no other home."

"The life of your aunt would be solitary without your society. In the absence of her son you must have been everything to her."

"Oh, yes; we love each other sincerely. I do not remember my own mother, but when I feel that heaven had given me so kind a one in her place, I cannot repine at her early removal, to dwell with angels."

"Inez," said Zavala, stopping, and turning towards them, "shall we show the ladies our woodland bower? I can fancy how much improved it is since we were last there together."

For an instant Inez stood motionless, an expression of painful surprise on her features, for on that spot their last parting had taken place; beneath its green shelter he had clasped her to his breast as his plighted bride; there tears of delicious rapture had filled her eyes, and she listened to the tender avowals of his love.

"No," she at length said; "the bower you will no longer care to see. Let us not go there."

"What! Have you then neglected my favourite haunt in my absence?" replied he, with an air of chagrin. "Let us go at any rate. I wish to see it."

"If it is your wish to go, I cannot prevent you from doing so, though I could wish that you would defer it until to-morrow morning, as some of my own things are scattered about, and—"

"Oh, in that case we will go by all means. I like above all things to gain admittance within the sanctum of a young lady, and look over the various things she collects around her. It gives one such insight into the character."

"My character you never have known; you never will know. Not that it is too intricate to be read by one who takes interest enough in me to attempt to fathom its depth, but—"

"Who ever fathomed the depths of a woman's character?" interrupted Zavala, with a sneer. "Come, let us profit by the few moments of twilight yet left to us."

A tear started to the eye of Inez, but it did not fall, and in silence they proceeded down a winding pathway which led to a cliff above the river. Within a few yards of it was the bower they sought Several young trees had been planted in a semicircle, and their pliant branches twisted together in such a manner as to form an arch overhead. Four light pillars were placed in front, with lattice work between them, on which the multiflora rose, coral honeysuckle, and star jessamine, were trained. These were now in full bloom, and their clusters of gay flowers contrasted beautifully with the deep verdure of the interior. In the centre was a table with a drawer half open, which seemed to be filled with music and manuscripts. Inez stepped foward to close it, but Zavala laid his hand on her arm and said—

"One peep, my fair cousin; only one, that I may discover of what you have been dreaming during my long absence. You do not know, young ladies, that my gentle cousin is gifted with the

genius of the poet. Pray, Inez, show us some of your productions."

"Not for worlds!" exclaimed Inez, closing the drawer, and locking it. "I have nothing worth showing, and my dreams, such as they were, would now have no charms for you."

Zavala bit his lip, and turned away, touched by a tone in her voice which conveyed reproach, and yet chagrined at her obstinacy. His eye fell on a piece of paper which the wind had wafted among the moss on the floor. He stooped, and quickly grasping it, saw that it contained several verses, which appeared to have been recently written. Inez sprang forward, and with a face glowing with emotion, entreated him to restore it to her.

"No—no—'tis my turn to be obstinate now. It is too dark to read it here, but we can see what it contains when we return to the house. Let us go."

"For shame, Don Pedro!" exclaimed Isabel, "return the paper. See how you distress your cousin."

Julie held out her hand for it, and merely said—

"You will not keep it?"

"Not if *you* bid me restore it," said he, bowing low as he placed the paper in her hand. Then turning to his cousin, he continued—

"It is, I suppose, an address to the genius of the place, or perchance to one on whom my gentle cousin has bestowed the boon of her affections."

"*My* affections," repeated Inez, in a tone of scorn, as she took the offered paper from Julie's hand, and tore it into fragments, "are not lightly bestowed. Though," she added, in so low a tone that no one understood her, "they have been prized lightly enough by one I once thought capable of better things."

CHAPTER XXX.

A FEW evenings after their arrival the family had assembled on the gallery, and Col. Alwin, after commenting to Madame Zavala on the beauty of Villa d'Esperanza, spoke of the scenery around Natchez.

"One of the wildest scenes I have ever beheld is within two miles of that place," said he, "I vainly inquired what was the origin of the singular name it bears."

"You allude to the Devil's Punch Bowls," said Madame Zavala, smiling. "Inez, I believe, can throw some interest around that strange, wild looking place, though she cannot inform you why it was named for the drinking cups of his Satanic majesty. She has a legend which is connected with it."

Petitions from all present, to hear the legend, were showered on shrinking Inez, who vainly drew back, protesting that what her d dignified with the name of a legend, was in fact an

imperfect translation made from an old Spanish manuscript, which was said to have been found in a small cavern scooped in the side of one of the gaps. An iron box, containing the manuscript and a few articles of jewellery of trifling value, had fallen into the hands of Zavala's father. Many years afterwards, she had, with difficulty, deciphered the faded characters, and made a fair translation of them.

"Let us hear it by all means," said Isabel. "My romance is already beginning to conjure up 'thick coming fancies,' and I expect a story of hair-breadth escapes."

"I fear you will be disappointed then," replied Inez, "for the story in question is rather a record of feeling than incident. However, I can no longer refuse to gratify you with the perusal of it."

In a few moments she produced a manuscript, from which she read the following story:

THE LEGEND OF THE DEVIL'S PUNCH BOWLS.

"Mine and me,
Of which she was the veiled divinity—
The world, I say, of thoughts that worshipped her."

"The joy
With which I heard one tread,
And the earnest blessings which I flung
In showers on one dear head."

"Should these lines ever fall into the hands of one acquainted with the language in which they are written, let him read the record of a life stained with crime, and darkened by despair, and receive a warning therefrom. It will teach him to avoid the indulgence of the impetuous passions, which have plunged me into an abyss of misery, from which there is no escape.

"Born to wealth and high station, gifted with talents which might have raised me to any height within the scope of a reasonable ambition, I end my life a miserable outcast from all human sympathy.

"I am a native of the beautiful city of Mexico, and the descendant of a line of proud ancestors, who would disown their representative could their shrouded forms rise from the silence of the tomb to behold his degradation. I was an only child, and unfortunately for me, my mother died while I was yet an infant. Had she lived, the hallowed influence of her affectionate precepts might have saved me from future misery. But it was fated to be otherwise.

"My youth was passed amid the most profuse indulgence. My fond father, proud of my fine person and precocious talents, fostered all the evil in my disposition by the unlimited liberty he allowed me. I was taught to look to the attainment of future greatness as the aim of my existence; and, strange inconsistency! I was at the same time taught to look upon the multitude, whose breath is fame, with the most sovereign contempt. I only regarded them as creatures who were to minister to my pride and gratification, without

reflecting that the humblest among them was endowed with the same capacities to suffer and enjoy—the same affections, the same impulses which animated my being.

"Ambitious, and possessing an ardent thirst for knowledge, I diligently applied myself to the acquirement of an education befitting the station I expected to fill. My time was divided between literary pursuits and the pleasures of the gay city in which I resided. One day would find me bending over the glowing page of history, my heart responding to the noble energies which animated its heroes, in fancy beholding myself emulating their career; and the next would probably see me in the haunts of dissipation, holding her orgies with those with whom I knew I had no fellowship in feeling or taste.

"In such desultory pursuits my character was formed. The gratification of the moment, my only incentive to exertion, what results could any expect from such an education, save reckless selfishness, and an utter disregard for everything but my own whims? My father's aim was to make me a great man; whether I was to be a good or useful one, he left chance to determine. His only care was to foster my eager wish for distinction, and it is possible he would have been gratified in his highest aspirations, had not the master passion of the soul thwarted his hopes. Love was destined to counteract ambition. Love has been the theme of many tongues and pens—laughed at and scorned by those whose iron hearts have never yielded to the witchery of woman's influence; yet to others it has brought misery, madness, death.

"The object of my choice, in her gentleness, purity, and confiding affection, was the very opposite of myself. Until I knew Celeste I had thought myself incapable of loving; bright eyes and thrilling tones had been passed unheeded by, and I deemed myself secure from all the wiles of the sex. In proportion to my former coldness, was the impetuosity of my passion. I only enjoyed life in the presence of my idol, and in absence my thoughts hovered perpetually around her.

"Don Alonzo Montejo was the most intimate friend of my father; like him, he possessed vast wealth, with an only child to inherit it. While yet in her childhood, Leonora Montejo and myself were betrothed by our parents, and taught to look forward to our union as an event that must unavoidably take place in the course of time. We were then thrown much together, and this intercourse did not contribute to inspire in us the sentiments our fathers so ardently desired. Both spoiled by injudicious indulgence, equally capricious and ungovernable, 'tis not surprising that we seldom met without quarrelling. As we grew older, however, we became better friends; we had been deeply impressed with the mutual advantages of the proposed union, and in the meantime, by a tacit agreement, we never interfered with each other's whims. Leonora flirted with every cavalier who offered his homage, and provided I paid my daily visit

to inquire after her health, the remainder of the twenty-four hours was entirely at my own disposal.

"One morning Leonora informed me that a cousin was coming to reside beneath her father's roof. She added that she was the daughter of Don Alonzo's only sister, who in early life had eloped with a young Frenchman, and from that time had been disowned by her family. The parents were both dead, leaving their only child dependent on her haughty and unknown relative. This information had nearly escaped my memory, when, on going to pay my daily visit to my betrothed, I found her new companion with her.

"I will here describe Celeste as she first appeared to me. The two girls were standing in the shrubbery, in the shadow of a large lime tree, and the young stranger was trimming a wreath of its fragrant flowers; an occupation completely in unison with her simple and childlike beauty. Her form was slight and graceful, and the black robe she wore served to give additional purity to a complexion I have never seen rivalled. Long curls of raven hair strayed over her graceful neck, and on that fair young brow were the shadows of thought and feeling thus early suppressed by suffering.

"Though struck with her exceeding beauty, and pleased with the retiring timidity of her manner, I did not fall in love at first sight. No; without being conscious of my enthralment, the chain was slowly but surely wound around my heart.

"During the first months of her residence with her uncle, Celeste was grave and taciturn; occasionally yielding to bursts of wild sorrow, when she thought of the loved ones she had lost, and the far away home of her childhood, where the fond affection of her parents had made her life one glad summer day.

"Time gradually lessened her grief, and once more she glided over the bright earth, one of its happiest creatures. Often have I stopped and listened to the ringing laugh of mirth which burst from her lips, and thought it a fit echo of the joyous spirit within.

"And this being, so formed to receive and bestow happiness, the gift of my fatal love was to destroy! To that heart I would freely have died to save one pang, I was destined to bring wretchedness.

"Many months glided away, and Leonora did not appear to observe my lengthened visits, nor the interest with which I lingered around her fair cousin. I knew she did not love me, and therefore thought of breaking the ties which fettered me without hesitation.

"In the grounds attached to Don Alonzo's residence were the remains of an old temple, supposed to have been erected by the natives of the country before it was conquered by the Spaniards. The broken walls were covered with ivy, and other wild vines, throwing the trappings of nature over the ruins of art. There it was I first breathed my passion to its object; before the ruined altar which had witnessed the sacrifice of thousands to the idol it once supported, I offered my devotion at the shrine of my divinity. The temple was partly unroofed, and the pale lamps of heaven looked down on us,

as if smiling on the pair who kneeled before that pagan altar, and vowed to live for each other. The moonbeams came through the broken windows, and cast a holy light on the youthful face of my Celeste, as she turned it towards heaven, as if invoking a blessing on the engagement we had just formed. I could not bear to behold her by this fitful and shadowy light; to my excited fancy it seemed to shroud her with the misty light belonging to beings of another world, and I drew her from the spot.

"As we emerged from the ruins, Leonora stood before us, with a face pale with anger. She immediately addressed Celeste—

"'Ungrateful girl! Is this the return you make for all the kindness that has been lavished on you beneath my father's roof? You have stolen from me the affections of my affianced husband, by your arts; but your benefactor shall be informed of your perfidy. For you, Sir,' turning to me—'there is but one feeling in my heart, and that is utter scorn and contempt. While yet bound by every tie of honour to me, you have dared to insult me by wooing another. I love you not—I never have loved you; but in return for this baseness, I trust the day will yet arrive when you will feel the pang of being deserted by her whom you have preferred before me. When that hour arrives, the slight you have offered Leonora Montejo will be remembered, and avenged.'

"Before I could reply, she turned and left us. Celeste listened to her words in indignant surprise; for until that moment she had believed me as free to offer, as she was to accept my love. It needed all my eloquence to reconcile her to the course I had pursued; and I returned to the house with her, with the determination to have an explanation with Don Alonzo without delay, and exonerate Celeste from any participation in the deception, if such had been practised; for I had never designed deceiving Leonora.

"We found the household in the greatest confusion; Don Alonzo had been inquiring for his daughter, who was not to be found; the search was continued for several hours without success, and at length it was decided that she must have eloped. In the morning, a letter was delivered to Don Alonzo, in which she related the discovery she pretended to have made only on the evening before; she informed him she had merely anticipated my desertion, and named as the companion of her flight a young Castilian, who was travelling through Mexico for amusement.

"Don Alonzo was furious; he refused to believe his daughter's assertions in reference to myself, and insisted she only made them as an excuse for her own conduct. I viewed them in the same light; though I did not doubt that her haughty temper was exasperated, that her poor and friendless cousin should have been preferred before herself, even by one for whom she had no affection.

"Don Alonzo's passion soon exhausted itself. Leonora was his only child, and after due concessions from the newly wedded pair, they were again received with favour. I succeeded in making my

peace with the fair bride, and all that remained for me to do, was to inform my father of my intentions relative to Celeste.

"He was very angry at the turn events had taken. He represented to me the folly of marrying without gaining some solid advantage, as a counterpoise to the loss of my liberty. When convinced that all his arguments were ineffectual, he raved—he swore that I should never ruin myself by marrying a girl, who had no recommendation, except a pretty face. Finding that fury did not move me, he became pathetic; he entreated me not to destroy all his towering hopes by my obstinacy. He insisted that wealth and influential connections were absolutely necessary to elevate me to the position he had set his heart on seeing me attain. He entreated me to sacrifice my happiness to strive for the glittering bait he had so often and so successfully held out to me before. He implored one who had never sacrificed the idlest whim that ever took possession of his fancy to give up the treasure of his heart! With as much effect might he have preached to the dashing billows, or the wild simoom, and commanded them to stay their course. I was immovable, and he left me in deep anger.

"He went to Celeste, with the hope that she could be frightened into renouncing me. I hastened to her support; and although I knew she loved me with all her heart, she refused to marry me while my father withheld his consent. Maddened by such opposition, I solemnly vowed to him that if he did not withdraw his prohibition to our union, I would abandon him for ever, become an exile from my native country, and seek in other lands the happiness he denied me in my own.

"Terrified by these threats, he at length agreed to a compromise. He consented that I should marry Celeste, if I would agree to spend a year at an University in Spain, and another in travelling over the continent of Europe. During that time, no letters should be allowed to pass between Celeste and myself. He trusted that time, and the novelty of scenes so interesting to my mind, would gradually obliterate all traces of my ill-placed affection, and on my return I would be quite willing to relinquish its object. I knew that he would be disappointed. I felt that with me to love once, was to love for ever; my heart was not formed for a light and passing passion—deep in my soul it burned its indelible traces, and no second dream could spring from the ashes of the first.

"I eagerly accepted his proposal, and hastened to communicate it to Celeste. She rejoiced that a definite period was named, which would put an end to our suspense. We once more exchanged vows in the old temple, and although we were not to commune by letter, we agreed that each night we would look on a certain bright star, and permit our spirits to mingle while gazing on that glittering orb.

"I took with me the key of a private door, leading into the garden, and in two years from that evening we were to meet on that spot, and again repeat the vows we then pledged to each other. I will

not dwell on our parting. I then thought that no deeper wretchedness could fall on me than to be separated from my Celeste; but now I look back upon that hour as one of happiness, when compared with those which have succeeded it.

"It is not my purpose to give a detailed account of my travels. I crossed the ocean in safety, spent a year at the university of ——, and commenced my tour. I have trod the halls of princes; I have drunk inspiration from the bewitching lips of high-born beauty, and have feasted in the halls of luxury and pride, bearing myself as gaily as if my heart were in the revelry of the moment. I have wandered over the fairest climes; now treading the solitary and deserted halls of the Alhambra, yielding my spirit to the deep fascination of the associations connected with its history; and now bending in silent reverence before some monument of man's genius in the city of the mighty dead, imperial Rome; I have glittered in the gay throng of a Parisian assembly; I have stood in the senate of the sea-girt isle, and listened with breathless interest to the eloquence of her sons; yet amid all my wanderings, my appointment to meet in thought with my beloved Celeste was never forgotten. That hour was held sacred from the intrusion of the outer world.

"At length the time for my return rolled around. I was in Paris and had made every arrangement to embark for my native land, when a packet from my father was placed in my hands. He informed me that the greater portion of his fortune was invested in a mercantile house in London which, from all accounts, was on the verge of bankruptcy; and he required me to hasten, with all the speed I could command, to rescue his wealth from the threatened peril. I immediately wrote to him, inclosing a letter for Celeste, in which I informed her of the cause of my delay, and set out for London.

"This business detained me several months, and at last ended in disappointment. I embarked for my native country with the conviction that my father would now be more averse than ever to the proposed union, for his once vast wealth was reduced to what he would scarcely consider a competency.

* * * * * *

"I beheld my country in the distance, and I stretched forth my arms as if I would have clasped it in my embrace. My own beautiful land, with its gorgeous skies and sunny plains, was before me; the home of my childhood and the dwelling-place of the woman I adored. As a fountain casting its crystal waters in a desert, was the memory of Celeste to me. She alone had ever touched the spring of tenderness in my nature, and caused my heart to unclose to the influences of a refined and genuine affection. I regarded her with a feeling more like the softened affection of a loving mother for the babe over whose fragile existence she watches with unwearied care, than the overflowings of a passionate spirit which had sought

happiness in the most luxurious pleasures the world could bestow, and turned in disgust from all to repose in the consciousness of loving and being loved with all the ardour of young affections. Oh, could that dream have remained unbroken, I might have been all the fondest heart could have desired!

"As I stood upon the deck and beheld the uplands crowned with the richest verdure, rising each moment more distinctly to view, my heart bounded with unchecked rapture. Not a doubt of the faith of Celeste crossed my mind. No; I looked on the cloudless azure depths above me, and exultingly exclaimed, 'Yonder vault is not more unsullied than the faith and purity of her I love.' Even as I spoke, as if ominous of the future, a dark cloud arose from behind the distant hills, and slowly swept over the horizon, veiling the fiery disk of the sun and intercepting his rays. I shuddered, for I loved too well not to be superstitious where Celeste was concerned.

"At length we landed, and I lost not a moment in setting out for my native city. I arrived there after night had thrown its mantle over the well-remembered scenes of former years. I alighted in the outskirts of the town, near the residence of Don Alonzo, and sent my attendant and baggage on to my father's mansion, instructing him to say I would be at home in two hours. I then bent my steps towards the old temple. It was the very hour in which our spirits had been wont to mingle in communion, and, though we had been so long separated, I was certain that I should find Celeste on the spot where I had last parted from her. It was a soft, balmy night, and the moon shone brilliantly over the garden. I paused and looked around to recognise each familiar object. There was the same thick shrubbery, with each walk of which was linked some dear association. On this spot we had lingered to pluck a flower, and on that I remembered the arch smile with which Celeste had replied to some remark of mine. Like faded flowers which still retain their perfume, the recollections of a love like mine could throw a charm over the most trivial incidents.

"In the distance the ivied walls of the ruin arose to view. As I passed along, the breath of the orange flowers was wafted towards me; remembering that in their beautiful language they are a type of constancy, I plucked a sprig as a fit offering from me to Celeste. I reached the temple, and beheld a white robe fluttering in the faint breeze. Fearful of startling her, if I appeared too suddenly before her, I stopped and sang a few notes from an old ballad which had been a great favourite with her. A half suppresssed shriek met my ear; so agonizing was that sound that I stood as one paralysed. That wail of anguish could have sprung from nothing save a breaking heart; I rushed forward, and in another instant Celeste was clasped in my arms, and her head lay on my shoulder powerless as an infant's, while she wept with uncontrollable violence.

"'Oh Celeste! Celeste!' I exclaimed, 'what is the meaning of

this anguish? Why are you thus, when I fondly hoped my presence would bring nothing but joy to your heart?'

"She started from me—

"'You have not then heard, you do not know my crime against you. Oh, Leon, leave me, and let me die, there is nothing else now left to me;' and she threw herself on a seat, and covered her face with her hands.

"'Leave you, Celeste! What means this reception? Have I not returned to claim my promised bride? Have you, too, changed, and am I again without a tie strong enough to bind me to life? Beware, girl! you know not the spirit with which you have to deal. Woman as you are, and loved as God alone can see, by the bright Heaven above us, if you have dared to trifle with me, I will fearfully avenge myself. What! am I to be the dupe of a heartless woman? All the deep affections of my soul wasted on one incapable of appreciating their value! Speak! tell me all, while I yet retain reason enough to understand the tale. Blast me with the knowledge of what will scorch and wither with as sure an aim as the fiery bolts of Heaven.'

"Terrified at the deep passion breathed in the tones of my voice, and the expression of livid rage in my countenance, Celeste sank from her seat, and, kneeling before me, raised her clasped hands in supplication.

"'Be calm, oh, be calm, I conjure you, Leon, and hear me. Do not look thus, or you will kill me; I cannot bear it. I was not false to you; that I am here and at this hour should be a sufficient evidence of my truth. I am a deceived, broken-hearted, perjured wretch, unworthy of the esteem of any creature; for I love you wildly, fervently, while my vows are plighted to another. That I was deceived, and in a moment of anger destroyed your happiness and my own, by becoming the wife of another, is the only excuse I can offer. Now you know all, leave me for ever.'

"I was overwhelmed. The concentrated agony of years was crowded in that brief moment. An aimless existence was before me; the only hope that had animated me to struggle through life's feverish dream annihilated. At length, I spoke.

"'Who has done this cruel deed? Who has wantonly severed two hearts that beat alone for each other? Celeste, could *I* have been wrought on to forsake you? Oh, woman—woman, weak where you should have been most strong! Tell me who you claim as a husband, and how you came to be his wife? Let me hear the whole maddening story at once.'

"In a low broken tone, Celeste revealed a tale of iniquity that made my blood seethe in my veins. In compliance with my compact with my father, we had forborne to write to each other, and he had taken advantage of the honourable fulfilment of that promise to destroy my happiness. He caused forged letters to be shown to the friends of Celeste, in which I spoke of my engagement as a childish

whim, which was only remembered with a smile. I returned thanks to my father for his wisdom in not permitting me to shackle myself with a wife, who must in a short time have become tiresome and odious to me.

"At first, Celeste indignantly repelled such insinuations, and professed the most unbounded confidence in my honour. She was laughed at, for her romantic faith; but at length, when wearied by the persecutions of those around her, a letter, purporting to be written by me, was conveyed to her, in which I demanded a release from all promises I had ever made to her, as I was about to bestow my hand upon another. The letter appeared genuine, and she could no longer doubt my perfidy. In a moment of wounded feeling and insulted pride, she wrote an answer which my crafty father took care should never reach me, and in one month became the bride of one who had long wooed her. The commands of her uncle, and the persuasions of Leonora, hurried her to the altar, from which she had scarcely returned, when her cruel cousin informed her of the deception of which she had been the victim. Leonora, to avenge the fancied slight I had offered her, entered with alacrity into my father's plans for separating us.

"I heard all without shrinking. I rushed from the garden with curses on my lips, and a feeling of rage within my crushed soul, that seemed as if 'twould suffocate me. I blindly hurried forward as if motion could stifle the keen sense of suffering which thrilled through every nerve in my frame. At length I fell insensible in the street, and was found in that condition by my servant, who had set out in search of me, when I failed to reach home at the appointed hour.

"Many days elapsed before I recovered from the delirium consequent on severe fever. I was in my father's house; but from the moment I became conscious of what was passing around me, I drove him from my presence. He besought me to permit him to watch beside my sick couch, to soothe, and endeavour to amuse me, but I repelled him with scorn and loathing. He had reduced me to this condition, and I took a savage pleasure in inflicting misery on him in return. I would sit for hours, gazing through my windows in listless silence, and no effort could arouse me from my abstraction.

"Months passed away, and still I refused all companionship. As a last resource, my father humbled himself to ask Celeste to visit me. She came, accompanied by her husband, and the sight of him aroused me from the state of stupid insanity into which I was falling, and made my heart burn with jealousy. The blast of selfishness, that sirocco of the heart, had passed over me, and I feared Celeste might learn to love him, for as I gazed on his noble features, and heard the eloquent words which imparted a grace to the merest trifles from his lips, I felt that he had every advantage over me, save of being the first one beloved. Though separated from her by her union with another, I could not brook the thought that she might become attached to him; and when he urged me to mingle again in society, I

resolved to do so; determined that absence should not dim the recollections of that love which had been my fate. From that time I saw her daily—without her society I was like a wretch condemned to perpetual darkness.

"I watched Celeste with unceasing interest, and I soon disovered that she was not less unhappy than myself. Young, noble, possessing all those qualities most likely to win the affections of a woman, I deemed it impossible that she should continue indifferent to her husband. A short time convinced me that he would never gain the heart of his wife. Knowing himself secure of the casket, he appeared to consider the gem it enshrined of little value. When the first gloss of his passion had worn off, he became inattentive, and finally neglectful. Often have I watched her footsteps, and heard the half-repressed sigh which burst from her bosom, as she witnessed his indifference, and contrasted it with the wild idolatry with which she had been regarded by one heart.

"Her husband was not intentionally unkind. He was careful that every whim was gratified; he crowded his splendid mansion with gay company, and in all his arrangements, her tastes were scrupulously consulted: but in vain did he invoke the spirit of revelry, to bring happiness to the young creature, who, though in a crowd, was in that worst of all solitudes, the solitude of the heart. Often have I seen her walk through her stately home, her pale brow crowned with the fresh roses of her clime, destined, like herself, to wither in their brightest bloom; and the listless step and heedless glance revealed a tale of suffering, few would have believed could enter so fair a paradise as the one around her. And where was her husband, while she thus wasted her young spirit in sadness which the voice of mirth and flattery was powerless to charm? Absorbed in the pursuit of pleasure, he sought for newer and more varied enjoyments than his own home offered. I knew that in her own mind, Celeste must contrast this conduct with the watchful tenderness with which I would have guarded her from the approach of unhappiness, and I could not feel sorrow that it was so.

"As my health became re-established, my father informed me that the change in his circumstances rendered it necessary for me to choose a profession, or turn my thoughts to a wealthy marriage, as the surest means of repining our broken fortunes. The last alternative, I scorned; and after some delay, I decided on entering the army. I was speedily promoted to the rank of Colonel, as the influence of my father was still great, notwithstanding his loss of fortune.

"At this crisis the husband of Celeste was seized with a malady which for many days baffled the skill of his physicians. I dare not record the tempest of joy that filled my soul, when I learned that in all probability he would be removed from my path. I visited him, to ascertain for myself the chances in his favour. The physician was in his room, and he said the disorder was near its crisis, and on

the care and attention of the approaching night his life would depend.

"I listened to his words, and for the first time a thought darted into my brain, which seemed to scorch it as it passed. I tried to drive it away, but it would come again and again. That night I was to watch beside him, and I felt that his life was in my hands. I went to the table, took up the medicines, and requested particular directions as to their use. As the physician turned away, I raised a small parcel, and inquired, 'if that was to be given?'

"'No,' he replied. 'In his present weak state, that would be certain death. It is a powerful narcotic.

"I carefully replaced it, and turned again to the patient. As I gazed on his pale features and closed eyes, my heart was almost turned from the fell purpose that filled it. My better angel might have triumphed, had I not glanced at the bowed head of Celeste. There was a touching expression of sorrow on her countenance, which maddened me. She regretted him! the young, the noble, thus early doomed to darkness and the worm. I could not bear it.

"'Celeste,' I said, in a tone scarcely above a whisper, 'do you wish him to recover? Does your heart wish it?'

"It was the first time I had dared to breathe a syllable in reference to the past. She cast on me a look which chilled me to the soul as she replied—

"'Oh, cruel—cruel! to ask such a question at such a moment. Can I wish to be thus freed?'

"From that instant his fate was sealed. I resolved that his eyes should never unclose to the light of Heaven, nor his heart bound with the consciousness of renewed life. I determined to delay giving him the medicines, and suffer him to perish through neglect; but this plan was frustrated by Celeste. She held her watch in her hand, and punctually required the draught to be prepared. I vainly endeavoured to induce her to leave him to my care, and seek a few moments' repose. She merely said—

"'No—no—my place is here, and I will not abandon it.'

"At length I thought of the narcotic. It appeared to be my only resource to accomplish the end I had in view; for, towards midnight, the breathing of the invalid became less laboured, and a few drops of moisture appeared on his parched brow.

"'He will recover,' I madly thought, 'and all my hopes be again dashed to the earth. Let him die! Death—death! what is it to the misery he has inflicted on me?'

"My hand, obedient to the impulse of my heart, clutched the fatal powder, and in another instant it was mingled with the last draught I was called on to prepare. Coward that I was, I dared not see him swallow it; and pretending sudden faintness, I called an attendant to support him, while Celeste, herself, held the deadly potion to his lips. I rushed into the open air, and walked about to calm myself, before again appearing in the sick room.

"When I returned, I found them all in commotion; the sudden change which had taken place convinced them that death was about to claim his victim. I looked into the face of my rival; I beheld death written on his convulsed features, and a fearful and insane joy filled my soul, as I saw him wrestle with the grim tyrant. I knew that he must die; no human skill could save him; the decree had gone forth, 'he must die,' and fearful was the rapture that filled my whole being, as these awful words rang through my brain.

"The only barrier which separated Celeste from me was about to be removed, and I exulted in the crime which had secured her to me. My heart thrilled with joy, as I repeated to myself—'She is mine, she is mine once more;' and my eye followed every movement as she hung over the pillow of her expiring husband, and wiped the death-dews from his brow. Will any one believe that even at that moment I was jealous? I could not bear that her tenderness should soothe even his last moments."

Here the manuscript was defaced, and several pages lost.

* * * * * * *

"The death of my father, and the orders I received to go on a frontier service, would, I feared, postpone my marriage to an indefinite period. The prospect of leaving Celeste was terrible to me; yet I could not think of exposing her to the chances of so perilous a voyage, nor a residence in a country where she would never be secure from danger. The station to which I was ordered, was Fort Rosalie, on the Mississippi river. The Indians had recently made several incursions, and it was necessary to protect the colony. I would have resigned my commission; but when ordered on a dangerous service, such a course would have exposed me to imputations on my courage which I could ill brook. I informed Celeste of my dilemma, and left it to her decision. She instantly said--'I must not think of resigning my commission. She was as willing to accompany me to the wild province to which I was ordered, as to remain in her own beautiful home.' Vainly did I dwell on the dangers to which she would be exposed; she thought lightly of them, in comparison with a separation from me, and I at last consented that she should be my companion; for with her society, even in the wilderness, I felt that I could be perfectly happy.

"Once more Celeste stood beside the altar, and breathed the vows of love and faith, and this time her heart ratified them; but she was not the same being, except in her unchanged affection for me. I could see that she was often languid and feverish, and her complexion was daily becoming more transparent.

"She was restlessly impatient to commence our journey; I would have deferred it until her health became more settled; but her physicians said that change of air and scene would probably prove the best restoratives. Our preparations were soon completed, and after

taking leave of our friends we left Mexico, and in a few days embarked for the place of our destination. Everything that could contribute to the comfort of our voyage, or our woodland home, I had obtained; and I pleased myself with thinking that Celeste would be surrounded with many of the luxuries of civilized life even in our wild and distant residence.

"We coasted along for several days, occasionally losing sight of land. We were at first favoured with delightful weather, and flattered ourselves with a speedy and prosperous voyage; but while crossing the Gulf a violent storm arose; the vessel sprang a leak, and to prevent her from sinking we were compelled to throw overboard a large quantity of her stores. We hoped that a fair wind would soon waft us to the nearest settlement on the river, and want of provisions would not be felt. Alas! all our calculations failed: a dead calm ensued, which lasted a week. On the seventh evening a faint breeze sprung up, and once more we proceeded on our voyage. On the following night we entered the Mississippi. The navigation of this dangerous and rapid stream was much more difficult than anything we had yet encountered, and our progress was necessarily very slow. From the mouth of the river to New Orleans, the banks offered one unbroken wall of verdure, so matted together with undergrowth that it seemed impervious to the tread of a human foot. We slowly continued our progress, uncertain when our voyage would end. Celeste faded daily, and I saw but one fate for her, which was to pass away from him who so madly loved her, before he had scarcely realized the happiness of claiming her as his own. She was at length so weak that she only sat up a few moments each day. We reached New Orleans, and procured fresh provisions. With renovated spirits we recommenced our voyage, and I fancied Celeste was much better. Alas! it was a deceitful hope.

"I soon knew that consumption had laid its wasting hand upon my idol, and as she grew worse I watched beside her couch day and night. I would scarcely suffer myself to sleep, fearing that her spirit might pass away while my senses were steeped in forgetfulness. Had the struggle continued much longer, my reason must have sunk beneath it. Remorse, which I had succeeded in stifling while hope remained that Celeste would be spared to me, was gnawing at my heart-strings. When I looked upon the past, the form of her murdered husband arose before me, with eyes that seemed to reproach me for my treachery, and claiming even in death the wife from whom he had been so iniquitously separated. When I looked forward, I beheld nothing save rayless, hopeless wretchedness.

"I was sitting beside her, watching her feeble respiration, with my fingers pressed on her fluttering pulse, when I heard a shout. I rushed on deck, and before me was the Fort. I had reached the bourne I had watched for with a sickening heart, when it was of no avail. A wild hope rushed into my heart, Celeste might yet revive. What wonders could not the fondest care achieve! Beneath the

influence of these hopes I rushed into the cabin, and throwing myself on my knees beside her couch, I bathed her brow with my burning tears, as I murmured—

"'Live, live, Celeste, for my sake live, and all will yet be well! Here in the deep forests we will find peace; and the bland airs that play around our home shall bring life to your heart, and health to your frame. Oh, my adored, arouse yourself to life and happiness.'

"A faint flush crossed her pallid cheek, and looking into my eyes with an expression of tender sadness, she said—

"'Tis too late. A few days earlier, perhaps, I might have rallied, but now I feel that I have but a few more hours to remain on earth with you, my beloved. Oh, Leon, in the years that are before you, do not forget your Celeste.'

"'Forget! O Heaven, can I ever forget? Cannot love, such as mine, save its object? would that I could die for you, life of my life! Oh! agony intolerable, to feel that all the mighty passion in my breast cannot gain a few brief hours of existence for the object of my love! What avails all I have done? I have perilled my soul, and stained myself with crime of the darkest dye, to gain the object of my adoration but to lose her, and thus!'

"I paused, for Celeste appeared endued with a degree of energy, as terrible as it was unexpected. She started up, and fixing her large eyes on me, with an expression of such agony as will haunt me to my grave, gasped—

"'Tell me, tell me, what crime? Oh, holy Virgin! I see it all. A murderer, and I the cause!'

"With a cry that froze me, she fell back on her pillow. I hastened to her, I called her by all the fondest terms of endearment; I kissed her cold lips. All, all was vain; in that moment of horror, life had fled for ever.

"We anchored about two miles above the fort, and immediately in front of us were three gaps in the high and precipitous bluff, of a most romantic and singular appearance. The cliff rose almost perpendicularly from the river nearly two hundred feet; and some terrible convulsion of nature, or the natural crumbling of the soil, had caused the earth to cave in, nearly in the form of half circles, with a strip of land about twenty feet in width between each one of them. The sides of these gaps were clothed with trees to their very summits, among which the gloomy pine predominated. The crumbling of the soil had caused many trees to slide from their original position, and taking with them a large portion of the earth in which they were imbedded; successive ridges had been formed near the lower part, which offered a fitting place of refuge for one who henceforth desired to dwell alone, a hermit in the wilderness. I selected one of these knolls for the grave of my Celeste, with the determination to build me a shelter near it, and remain so long as life lasted the guardian of those beloved ashes. I assembled the

officers under my command, and in defiance of their remonstrances I resigned my authority to the next in rank.

"It was not until the sods were laid on her grave, and I kneeled above them, that I felt how utter—how hopeless was my bereavement. The beloved—the worshipped one was gone for ever! Then the desolation, which had overwhelmed me, overcame me; I tossed my arms in fruitless anguish, and called on Him who had thus blasted me, to take the life which was a burden to its possessor.

"In mercy, were my frantic cries unheeded. I have been allowed time to repent of the evil I committed; and to see in its punishment the hand of that merciful Providence which permits not a sparrow to fall to the ground unheeded. I humbly hope I have made my peace with Him, before whose tribunal I must shortly stand."

Inez put aside the manuscript, and all present earnestly thanked her for the pleasure its perusal had afforded them. Zavala said—

"In truth, my fair cousin, you write very gracefully. Tell us now, ma chère, have you embodied your own feelings in the vivid picture of passion you have painted in that legend, or only drawn on your imagination."

"You appear to forget," said Inez evasively, "that it is a mere translation, and I am in no way accountable for the sentiments expressed. I have merely performed the duty of an honest interpreter, in setting down the feelings of the hero as he has himself described them."

"Well, my pretty Inez, I must perforce believe you, though, as you read, I fancied I could trace a deeper sympathy with the feelings expressed, than that of a mere translator."

Inez turned away without reply, and the bitter tears of wounded pride and outraged affection sprang into her eyes; but they were only allowed to fall in solitude: and when she again returned to their guests, her manner was as calm as usual. Not one around her dreamed of the struggle that wrung her heart,—of the anguish that deepened day by day, until death would have seemed to her a welcome release from suffering.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Inez," said Zavala, "I have a letter from my uncle, and he will be here to-day."

Her face brightened—

"That is good news indeed; I did not know my uncle could leave his command just now. I must go and inform my aunt, that she may share my joy."

"Stay; you need not be in such a hurry to leave me; I cannot get you to remain alone with me a moment. My mother is already apprised of General Zavala's arrival; and a portion of her letter contains something of interest to you. He says that Don Henriquez

de Montery will accompany him. Ha! you change colour; is it so, then? Has this Montery won my fair cousin in my absence? If I mistake not, this is not his first visit to Villa d'Esperanza."

"No, it is not," said Inez, recovering from her momentary embarrassment. Don Henriquez has before visited us in company with my uncle; but the inference you draw from it is not correct. I have not been won by him."

"My uncle appears to think differently. He speaks of Montery in such terms as induce me to believe that he wishes and expects him to stand in a nearer relation to him than he now does."

"The wishes of my uncle have always been respected by me; but in the present instance, my own feelings must be consulted before them. I shall never be more to Don Henriquez than I now am."

"Have you weighed all the advantages of this union, before you decided to refuse it? Of your own nation and faith—noble, wealthy—devotedly attached to you—what more can you require?"

Inez felt as if a grasp of iron had been laid on her heart; but she struggled against the emotion which threatened to suffocate her. She calmly replied—

"Nothing more from him; but do you think me capable of rewarding that devotion, by giving him a hand which cannot bestow the heart which should accompany it? I cannot love him."

"Pooh! nonsense! you are too sentimental. You do not adore him, perhaps, as you ladies of genius and exalted sentiment expect to love; but you can care for him as much as a sober, rational man will desire."

"If a diamond, of great beauty and value, were bestowed on one, who, in a moment of caprice, should reduce it to ashes, and another should offer all that is dear to him, for the remains of what was once as valuable, would it be honest to accept his offer?"

Zavala shrank before the clear eye that rested on him—

"I must understand you, Inez; you speak in riddles—pray, explain yourself."

"Yet, methinks, my meaning is obvious enough. However, we will talk no more of this. Let it suffice, that I neither can nor will marry Don Henriquez. My uncle is always kind and considerate, and will not urge me to sacrifice my feelings to his wishes."

"It must be so, if it is your will; but I could wish that you would consider your own interest, and——"

"*Interest*," interrupted Inez, with an expression of contempt. "'Tis well for you to speak to me of interest; yet I am not so lost to the nobler feelings of my sex, as to make a marriage of mere interest. Much as you may sneer at my exalted sentimentality, I never will marry a man for whom I do not feel an affection so fervent that it will enable me to endure all evils—to shrink from no suffering, if shared with him. Such love I can never cherish for Don Henriquez; this love is felt by such as I am, but once,—you

best know if it has been known, and what chances there are for a new suitor."

"Nay, Inez, you cannot mean that the childish caprice we felt for each other before we parted, is so seriously to influence all your future years."

"I do not know what it was to you; but to me, it has been my destiny, childish as it was."

"All things change, Inez; why should you deem yourself exempted from the general law?"

"You have shown that you at least are not," replied Inez, bitterly. "I have no desire to recal the heart that has wandered. I no longer deceive myself with the hope which has been clasped to my breast with the convulsive strength of despair. For one of my faith, there is always a refuge when bankrupt in joy and happiness; a convent can receive me."

"Good Heaven! Inez, are you mad, to talk thus? What will become of my mother, if you should abandon her for the gloom of the convent?"

"She will find consolation for my loss in the endearments of your new love. Never more can I be to her what I once was. Wherever I move, the shadow of the past is around me; and this home, once so dear to me, is now a cheerless desert. I know that you have ceased to love me, and I have resigned the dream of my life; the struggle is past, and I have crushed every aspiration after that happiness I once believed securely mine; yet I would gladly go far away from the scenes amid which this blight has fallen on me."

"My own dearest Inez, you inflict tortures on me by your words," said Zavala, in a tone of awakened sensibility. "Were it not for *one* consideration, I never would resign you but with existence. I love you, Inez—indeed, I do; not with as pure and noble a passion as yours, but with the love of a fond brother for a very dear sister. I wish to promote your happiness, in every arrangement I make."

"I do not wish to draw any avowals from you," said Inez calmly. "I have been betrayed into the expression of my feelings by your importunities relative to Don Henriquez. You have forced me to it, by acting as though you supposed the memory of the past has become to me, what it has long since been to you, a wearisome record of events, which time and change have deprived of all interest."

"What then would you have me do, Inez? All my interests in life are at stake. If I do not marry Miss de Bourg, more than you dream of will be lost to me. Oh, Inez, believe that I am not intentionally unkind or inconstant; I am the victim of circumstances."

"Zavala," said Inez almost sternly, yet sorrowfully, "do not seek to deceive me now. I know that you love Miss de Bourg. I have seen you at her side, I have marked your manner to her; why then speak of the force of circumstances? I do not seek to fetter you with the remembrance of what is due to me; for if you were freed from your present ties, you could be to me nothing more than you now are

The heart I have failed to keep will never again be accepted by me 'Tis far better even thus, than as your wife to have endured the misery of seeing you grow cold to me, for such I now feel would have been my doom. Adieu, we have said quite enough on this subject, and I do not choose that it shall be again renewed."

Some hours later, the beauty of the evening tempted Isabel to walk in the spacious garden. As she wandered down one of the long and densely shaded avenues, she approached a part of the inclosure, separated from the rest by a row of cedar trees, planted so closely as to interlace their boughs. Surprised to hear a low moaning sound, as if some one was there in deep distress, she carefully parted the branches and gazed in surprise at the scene they disclosed. An area of about fourteen feet, was entirely encircled by the gloomy cedar, and in the centre of the level turf a marble tablet, supported by four light columns, marked it as the spot where the honoured dead reposed. By the faint and imperfect light she beheld Inez extended on the monument, her brow pressed to its cold surface, and her long hair sweeping in dishevelled masses around her form.

"O my father, why didst thou pass away from earth, and leave me to bewail the bitter boon of existence? Let me die, O God of Heaven, and I shall indeed believe thee merciful!"

Such was the prayer which struggled for utterance amid the sobs of anguish that burst from her bosom. For some moments Isabel stood uncertain whether to leave her to the indulgence of her sorrow or to reveal herself. Pity for one so young and so unhappy, prevailed over a feeling of delicacy which prompted her to withdraw, without offering sympathy to one apparently so desolate. Softly approaching, she laid her hand on that of the young sufferer. Inez started up, exclaiming—

"Who are you? What would you with me? Ah, Miss Alwin, you are kind to seek me, but I am only fit to be left alone just now. Pray, pray go, I cannot bear companionship at present."

"Dear Inez," whispered Isabel in her softest tone, as she drew nearer to the young girl, "permit me to stay with you, and lighten your sorrow by sharing it. Believe one who has herself known grief, that it will be lessened by sympathy."

Overcome by the tones of tender interest, Inez threw herself upon the bosom of Isabel, and wept without restraint.

"Forgive me," she at length murmured, "I would have repulsed you, for I forgot that all are not so cold as *he* is. I thank you for your sympathy; it has reconciled me to an existence which but a few moments since I would willingly have parted with."

"Talk not thus, dear Inez. In losing you, the happiness of your aunt, of Don Pedro would be——"

"Speak not to me of Zavala," interrupted Inez, passionately—"in *his* estimation I am nothing. Were it not for my aunt I could envy the dust that lies beneath this tablet in quietness, and wish to share its resting-place."

"Were you not then weeping over your lost parent, Inez?"

"Why should I weep when he is at rest? Ah, no, my tears were not for the passionless and peaceful dead, but for the wrecked hopes of the living. Ah, Miss Alwin—Isabel I will call you—may you never know how great a weight of wretchedness the heart can bear, and yet fail to break!"

For the first time, a suspicion of the truth flashed on the mind of Isabel. She knew the grief of slighted love was all that could trouble the life-current of the young Spaniard, and she instantly comprehended the whole state of the case. A deeper shade of dislike was added to her feelings towards Zavala, as she looked on the drooping form of this romantic and sensitive girl, mourning over the love that had been wasted on one so utterly unworthy of it.

"Inez," she commenced, but her voice died away, uncertain what she could say to soothe or console her.

"I understand you," she mournfully replied. "In my weakness I have laid my heart bare before you: you have read its secret, and scorn me for my unwomanly sorrow. This much, however, I may surely say, although you are *her* friend, I was not won unsought."

"No, no, dear Inez, you misinterpret my silence. Believe me, I understand and appreciate your feelings. Permit me to tell you what may render them less bitter. Julie is not willingly your rival: she does not love Don Pedro, she never has loved him, and the knowledge of this will prove an additional barrier to her union with him. Believe me, she will rejoice in any excuse to free herself from his importunities. Permit me to inform her—"

Inez threw back her hair, and stood before her, with the brilliant flush of pride on her cheek—

"Never! never more to me, shall the offering of a rejected heart be made. If all my devotion failed to preserve it, do you think I would reclaim it, when another has appropriated its warmest affections? No, weak and foolish as I am to mourn over his falsehood, such degradation as this I could not bear. Forget what you have just now witnessed, Miss Alwin, and above all, hint it not to my rival. I could not bear to receive pity from her. Come, let us leave this gloomy place."

She rapidly wound her disordered tresses around her head, and while she sought for the comb which had escaped from them, she continued—

"Look not, speak not as if you had ever heard this confidence, and I will thank you. I am not so lost to the pride and delicacy of my sex, as to be willing to receive pity where I would fain claim respect."

"Respect, as well as affection, you must have from all who have the happiness of knowing you, Inez."

"Thank you," she said with a faint smile. "Your love I would gladly obtain, but there are few from whom I would care to claim it. Let us return to the house, my aunt will be expecting us to tea."

They slowly walked forward, Inez making an effort to converse on indifferent subjects, in order to drive the remembrance of their recent conversation from the mind of her companion.

That evening they had dancing. Several ladies and gentlemen, from a neighbouring plantation, came over to visit them, and the hours passed in light-hearted enjoyment. Isabel gazed in astonishment at Inez. She appeared wildly gay, and as she saw her floating fairy-like through the dance, and heard the tones of her voice, which seemed to awake a glad echo in the heart of each listener, she wondered if it could be the same Inez she had seen a few hours before, weeping over the desolation of her lot with that passionate sorrow which only persons of deep sensibility can feel. As their eyes met, Inez read her thoughts, and she seemed to exult in the perplexity which appeared on the countenance of her new friend. She approached and whispered—

"You see I am not always the weak, repining creature you have thought me. I can conquer myself."

At that moment a slight bustle was heard in the hall, and immediately afterwards, a tall, superb looking figure, in a military garb, entered the room. The stranger had a dark animated face, with large whiskers, and a moustache. He had the air of a person accustomed to command, and there was a slight degree of hauteur mingled with the courtesy of his address. He was accompanied by a young man, also in uniform, who possessed the regular features, flashing black eye, and aristocratic mien of the Castilian race.

"My brother—welcome—thrice welcome," said Madame Zavala, as she saluted the elder stranger with great cordiality. Zavala performed the ceremony of presenting him to Col. Alwin with much emphasis; and then Inez came forward and impulsively threw herself into his arms. The emotion she had repressed throughout the evening with such painful effort, would be restrained no longer, and she wept bitterly. Gen. Zavala bent over her, and addressed her in the liquid tones of his own tongue; and his fine face looked yet handsomer, as it wore the impress of awakened feeling for the agitated girl who clung to his bosom.

CHAPTER XXXII.

It was yet early dawn, when two figures issued from the house, and took the pathway leading towards the river. One was the stately form of the Spanish general, while in the lighter and more agile figure might have been recognised that of Zavala. Neither spoke, until they stood on the edge of the overhanging precipice, and beheld the turbid current which flowed beneath. Gen. Zavala was the first to break the silence.

"What do you propose to yourself, nephew, in playing a double part with this American?"

A peculiar smile flitted over the face of Zavala, as he heard the question; and he answered—

"To keep him in my power, of course, and to make him feel that he is so. He is blind enough to think that all the influence of my connexions is to be exerted to elevate him to the post his ambition seeks, while to me, he is contented to give only a promise of future recompense, when he has won all he now hopes for. It suits me not, my good uncle."

"And why not? The promise of such a man is sufficient guarantee for the fulfilment of his word; for an honourable man, all concur in considering him. He cannot reward you before success crowns his schemes."

"I demanded but one reward," replied Zavala. "The hand of his adopted daughter was the price of my assistance. She, like the rest of her sex, refuses what courts her acceptance, and I can see that, in the event of his success, my suit will be rejected. All I ask of you is, to delay your assistance; amuse him with the belief that you are waiting for advices from Mexico, and I can easily manage the rest."

"I dare say you can, but not exactly to my satisfaction. The case seems to stand thus: Alwin trusts me, and I deceive him; I confide in you, and probably receive the same reward. What becomes of my ascendancy in Mexico, if his plans are frustrated?"

"Would not a handsome sum from the government of this country be a more substantial benefit to you, than a voice in the wavering councils of such a nation as Mexico?"

"I do not place money in competition with faith and honour," was the haughty reply. "You are a degenerate son of your mother's house, if such are really your views. Can the owner of these broad lands, which annually yield a revenue that the utmost prodigality should scarcely enable you to dissipate, be of so grasping a spirit as to seek to increase them by the basest treachery to his friend? Worse than the wandering Arab, who at least respects the rights of those with whom he has broken bread, you are ready to betray one who has made you the confidant of his hopes and intentions. I trust, for the honour of man, that you were but jesting when you spoke of such treachery to Col. Alwin."

"And pray, my good uncle, what are you yourself proposing to do, but betray your country into the hands of a stranger, and assist him in designs against his own? Methinks your conscience is tender where another is concerned, while your own interests have blinded you to the consequences of the course you are determined to pursue."

"No," replied Gen. Zavala; "the cases are widely different. The government of Mexico is feeble, and at the same time oppressive. In freeing my countrymen from the yoke that enslaves them, I shall confer on them an obligation which will entitle me to their eternal

gratitude. 'Tis true we take a stranger into our councils, but we will so effectually clip his power that——"

"Believe it not," interrupted Zavala. "Give Alwin a place in your councils, and see what will be the result. I tell you, he will soon bend every man among you to his will. He aspires to nothing less than sovereign authority; and under his rule, the situation of your country will be but little improved. It will be merely exchanging anarchy for an iron despotism. Consent to my proposal; temporize with him, and we shall speedily have him in our power. Then we can make our own terms, and by clipping the pinions of his soaring ambition, compel him to wing a lower flight than he now contemplates."

"But how shall this be managed? I do not think a man of his penetration can be deceived, or one of his energy of purpose easily baffled."

"All men possess their weak points, and his is overweening confidence in himself. Wait a short time, Sir, and observe the progress of events. The country is already in a state of excitement. Alwin is strongly suspected; every effort is making to fortify New Orleans, and to collect a sufficient force to defend the city in case of an attack. Delay pledging yourself to his cause, until it will no longer be in his power to make terms with us; and the game is in your own hands. Ah, here he comes; pray be wary, and remember my words. I must leave you; for I do not wish him to know that we have held a private conversation this morning."

As he concluded, he rapidly walked away in an opposite direction from that in which Col. Alwin was approaching. Gen. Zavala looked after him, and muttered—

"I could not have believed that such a perverted mind dwells in so goodly a form. Treacherous to his friend without even the excuse of self-interest; for surely the success of Alwin opens to him a wide and elevated sphere of action. I cannot understand him."

He turned to greet Col. Alwin, who had made an appointment the night before to meet him at sunrise on that spot.

"You were out earlier than I anticipated," said Alwin. "I have been up since three o'clock looking over the papers you gave me last night. Had I known you had left your room, I should have requested the favour of an interview at even an earlier hour than this. Some of the information I derived from them was entirely new to me, though I know not by what mischance I have been kept so long in ignorance of what so nearly concerns me."

Gen. Zavala appeared surprised.

"You were not then aware that General W— has requested a detachment of troops from the Governor of Mississippi, which was refused, as he could not produce any authority for such a requisition. He has employed a number of men to repair the old fortifications, and place the city of New Orleans in a state of defence."

"All this he may well do as a cover to his real designs. I think

he is too deeply pledged to me to desert my cause. By our agreement he places himself in a commanding position in New Orleans; and when my standard is raised, he immediately joins me with the troops under his authority; this corps is to be the rallying point for my followers. You are aware that my ostensible object is to settle the lands I have purchased, lying between the Sabine and Nachitoches. That pretence will serve to further my designs on Mexico, and I have such assurances of support as render me sanguine as to the result. W—, after establishing himself on the borders of Mexico, will strike the first blow, when it is deemed expedient, and thus the commencement of hostilities will apparently be made under the sanction of the American flag."

"But this W—, are you certain of his co-operation? I have held an interview with him, and I judge him to be one who will desert the cause to which he is pledged, on the slightest suspicion of its downfall."

"If such a catastrophe were threatened, I believe myself he would play the traitor. However, he understands his own interests too well to break faith with me, and his present show of patriotism is a mere ruse to deceive the government. He is bound to me by ties he dare not break, and so long as the chances of success are in my favour, he will have no desire to break them. Should fortune show a frowning face, I am well aware he would desert me, and throw his influence into the opposing scale."

"You do not yet know him thoroughly. Read this paper, and you will see that he is more deeply treacherous than you supposed."

He presented a closely written paper to Alwin, who perused it carefully, and after pondering over its contents a few moments, he said with a smile—

"I still adhere to my own views. If success is ours, he will become one of our warmest supporters; if not, one of our bitterest foes, for he would know himself to be in my power, and fear I might implicate him in my downfall. I am aware that I stand on a precipice from which there are no means of descending without being crushed; yet I fear not the result. What my ulterior views may be, is known only to myself, and I defy any man to prove a treasonable design against me; yet, if I fail, the mere suspicion will be ruin. It is no treason to my own country to aid a people who have revolted from oppression to establish their freedom. The project we have discussed in our correspondence in regard to revolutionizing Mexico, has been long matured in my own mind, and I have obtained from the British government the promise of a naval squadron to aid in the attempt."

"Ah, that sounds well, but are you aware that W— has despatched one of his aids to Mexico, for the purpose of apprising the Viceroy of the dangers that menace him from this projected invasion?"

"I am fully informed that such was his ostensible purpose; but beneath that was a design first formed by myself, of thus discovering the exact topography of the country, and the military defences

which intervene between the Sabine and the city of Mexico. I also know that the messenger was coldly received by the Viceroy, and has already returned. He, however, succeeded in obtaining what I desired, as this will convince you."

He drew from his pocket a correct map of the route pursued by the messenger, and displayed it to the astonished general.

"Besides this," he continued, "I have despatches from the Spanish minister, offering every inducement to me to proceed. Indeed he assures me that my enterprise is so popular in Mexico, and the people so anxious to escape from the thraldom of the home government, that I confidently expect to be received as a deliverer. The Catholic Bishop of New Orleans is also one of my strongest partisans."

General Zavala seemed impressed by these statements, which were adroitly thrown out to confirm his wavering intentions.

"The influence of the clergy in a Catholic country is incalculable; if they approve, the people will rise *en masse*. Since first listening to these plans for subverting our present government, I have twice visited Mexico, and have held many conferences with the most influential persons in the city. The intelligent portion of the inhabitants are unanimous in favour of a revolution, and the lower orders can be led by the priests. Co-operation on the part of the Mexicans, you thus see, is certain; your only difficulty now lies with the management of your own countrymen."

"Never doubt my ability to accomplish that," replied Alwin, with a proud smile. "I pique myself on my power to mould others to my will."

"Why then," said Gen. Zavala somewhat abruptly, as he fixed his piercing glance on the face of his companion, "why did you not secure to yourself the highest authority in your own country, when it was in your power so do so?"

"Because I would not barter my integrity for a precarious power," replied Alwin calmly. "Had it been held for life, I might, perhaps, have been less scrupulous; but for a few brief years to be set up at the head of government only as a conspicuous mark for the arrows of a party to be launched against, and those arrows often barbed with falsehood and malevolence, was a species of greatness I cared little for. Yet, the post would have been fairly and honourably mine, had justice been awarded me."

"I cannot comprehend why you should have dreaded the defamation of newspapers, when no man of the age has had more abuse heaped on him from such sources, and, except in one instance, you have paid no attention to it."

"No; I rarely read it. When it did by chance meet my eye, I considered it beneath my notice."

"Yet your passiveness has given your enemies licence to say much that has impaired you in the estimation of the public."

"I do not doubt it now, and it was this conviction which induced me to resent the aspersions thrown on my character in the instance

to which you allude. I then vindicated myself at the expense of a life which was valuable to my country. I have since made an unalterable determination to suffer the hireling scribblers of party to assert what they choose of me. The falsehood of their charges must be their own refutation. Let us return to my room. I have documents of importance there to exhibit to you."

He linked his arm in that of Gen. Zavala, and the two proceeded to the house in earnest conversation. The result of their interview was a pledge on the part of the Spanish chieftain, to hold himself in readiness to proclaim himself a follower of Col. Alwin, whenever the course of events rendered it expedient to do so.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

General Zavala remained several days, and it was observed that Inez held many animated conversations with him. She appeared to be earnestly imploring some favour he was unwilling to grant. Her extreme coldness to Don Henriquez de Montery, caused him to depart after a stay of only one day, and the penetration of her uncle was not long in detecting the cause of her earnest wish to leave Villa d'Esperanza.

On the eve of his departure, as Inez left him, he said—

"Ah, well, you little gipsy, I suppose it must be as you wish, though it is a foolish whim. In less than two months you will be besieging me with letters to take you from the dull place in which you seem so anxious to immure yourself."

"We shall see, uncle. I can but try this change, which I so much need. I feel that I shall die if I remain here."

"Ah, yes, we shall see," muttered Gen. Zavala, as she left him. "A pretty place truly has she chosen, in which to forget the disappointment that has caused her so much unhappiness. That graceless nephew of mine deserves punishment for his conduct to his orphan cousin. I will leave Inez in the convent as she desires, until affairs in Mexico are in a more settled state; then I will remove her to her native city, proclaim her the heiress to my wealth, and marry her to some worthy fellow. By that time all this fantasy about first love and eternal fidelity will be out of her pretty little head."

Inez knew that such opposition would be offered to her intended departure, that she had exacted from her uncle a promise not to betray it to any one. She spent the greater portion of the night in writing, and bidding farewell to the home which had been to her heart the Eden of the world. She knelt and bowed her head in prayer; she madly prayed for strength to bear the burden which was crushing her young heart; yet while the holy name of the Eternal was on her lips, the form of him who had forsaken her was on her mind and before her aching vision. She beheld him by the side of another, engrossed by his love for her, while she was forgotten. Ah,

how she had prized that inconstant heart! With what fond affection had she treasured every word, every look, which had told her she was beloved. In her girlish fantasy she had preserved many trifling tokens of affection, but on this night they were all immolated on the altar of principle. To forget this love which had been interwoven with her very existence, was henceforth to be the object of the dreary years that lay darkly before her imagination.

Gen. Zavala departed at daylight, and when breakfast was announced, and Inez did not make her appearance, a servant was sent to her room to ascertain the cause. She immediately returned with several letters, which had been left on the dressing table. Zavala hastily tore open the one addressed to himself, and read the following:

"Let thy heart tell thee whence it came,
Oh loved too well in days of yore,
Linger again upon my name,
And yield thy soul at least once more
Unto the spell by memory cast
Upon the unforgotten past.

"Give unto me one fond bright dream,
Fleeting it may be, yet more dear;
And as thou readest, may'st thou deem
My darkened spirit hovering near,
A blessing on thy heart to pour,
And then to leave thee evermore.

"Zavala, when these lines reach you, I shall be far away. I trust that we have met for the last time. Oh, that I should live to trace these words, to feel their bitter meaning, and yet bear my bleeding heart away from all I have most fondly loved. It will not break, although it throbs so wildly with the weight of wretchedness that presses on it. Cruel, false, and unfeeling as false, it was not enough to desert me for one who loves you not, but you added to the bitterness of that desertion the proposal to wed another. It needed but this to add the last drop of insult to the overflowing cup your hand offered me.

"And thou art the man before whom my haughty soul has bowed with a blindness of idolatry worthy of a pagan altar. Worthy of such worship was the divinity, for it has proved itself as hard and cold as stone. Oh, cruel, selfish cousin, thou hast trampled on my agonized heart with as little remorse as though it had been the withered leaf of autumn. And to gain what? A heart that recoils from you.

"If you had deserted me for one who loves you with as pure a love as I have lavished on so worthless an idol, it had been something to mitigate my anguish; but I am rivalled by one over whose spirit you hold the mastery of fear, but not of affection. The cheek of her who loves, pales not when her betrothed approaches and whispers love's fond words in her ear.

"Yet think not that I would recal your truant vows. We never could again be what we once were to each other. I have been nurtured in solitude, and my heart has made for itself but one dream—now others will come to it. I will seek other sources of happiness, and the name of love shall become to me a sound destitute of meaning; for such natures as mine cannot love, forget, and love again. Though a rock may in time gather moss on its cold hard surface, the heart over which the lightning gleam of passion has passed, is seared and blighted for ever.

"You wish to promote my happiness!—such were the words you used in mockery. Give back my first fond dream of perfection—give back my trust in human nature—my young spirit's bounding joyousness—give me back all these, and then bid me be happy, and your words will not seem an insult.

"Yet I shall be happy. Think not that my life can be made permanently wretched by such a being as you have proved yourself. No—I will force myself to scorn you. The waters over which my bark of life may glide, may be dark, but they shall be untroubled by the memory of the past; and in a few fleeting months the rainbow of hope will cast as bright a halo over them as in days of yore.

"Even now, as I write alone, with the dew of anguish starting on my brow, I hear the voice of revelry, and you are in its midst, with my rival by your side! yet I can see no dream of the bright future in *her* eye as your stately form passes before her. Oh, Zavala, you have chosen your lot, and I can breathe a prayer for your happiness amid my own desolation; yet yours, like mine, will be a loveless one. The eye of the one you seek, will never, for you, kindle with affection's glance; and at some future day, when feeling its great need amid the emptiness of life, you may think with sorrow of the heart you have slighted."

Such was the letter of Inez; with pride and passion so strangely blended, it was impossible to tell which predominated. It painted well the state of the writer's mind; now weeping in helpless anguish over the broken idol of her youth, then wiping away her tears, as the glow of insulted pride and wounded affection crimsoned her cheek, determined to cast his image from the shrine he had so ruthlessly desecrated.

Alas, poor girl! It was far easier to resolve than to accomplish; her memory was only of him, and to forget him, she must blot from its records her past existence. It was a hard lesson for a creature of impulsive sensibility to learn.

Her letter to her aunt was written in a more composed spirit. It ran thus—

"My beloved aunt, my more than mother, think me not ungrateful for leaving you. It has cost me a bitter struggle to gain my

own consent; but I feel that I must depart from your side, or my reason will be the sacrifice. Words can never express to you what I have suffered in the past week; you thought me calm, when I was in torture; for pride as indomitable as that of the Spartan boy sustained me. I cannot—no, I cannot longer stay and behold *him* devoted to another. She is doubtless far worthier of his love, but she can never feel for him a thousandth part of the wild idolatry with which I have regarded him. Oh, God! that I *could* so love, and yet be scorned! Had it been the affection of a few brief months, I think I could have torn it from my breast; but it has been to me as the very pulse of my heart, since reason first dawned on my mind. Yet, do not think that I blame him too deeply. Oh, no—the fault—the want of attraction is in myself; I know, I feel that the object of his choice is lovelier far than I am; yet methinks my love should have had some weight with him; it should have withheld him from casting me off too recklessly; less as if the past were to both of us an unsubstantial dream. That past, which I dare not look on, yet which is all that I possess!

"I leave you, beloved friend, although I never loved you so deeply as in this sad parting hour. I go forth from this once happy home with my uncle; he will protect and place me in a safe asylum. There I shall learn to subdue my uncurbed spirit, and find peace in devoting myself to Heaven. My resolution to take the veil is fixed. I do not name to you the convent in which I intend seeking an asylum, because I would save myself from solicitations which would be useless, and only harrowing to the minds of both.

"Adieu, beloved protectress. Give your prayers to your once fondly-loved Inez, and think of her as one who has escaped the snares of the world, to find that peace which only Heaven can bestow."

There was a third letter from General Zavala to his sister, informing her that he had yielded to the urgent entreaties of Inez, in the belief that absence from the scene of her recent sufferings was necessary to the health of both mind and body. He promised, if such should be the desire of Inez, to restore her to the protection of her aunt at some future day, when she had recovered sufficient calmness to look on the wreck of her happiness, without the bitter anguish she now endured. He animadverted with severity on the conduct of his nephew, and informed him that he waived the right of Inez to the provision bestowed on her by the will of his father, as he charged himself with her future fortune.

Madame Zavala was at first deeply wounded by the desertion of Inez, but a little reflection convinced her that it was the best course she could have pursued; and she consoled herself with the reflection that she should soon be able to discover the convent in which she had immured herself, and use all her eloquence to bring her back.

Zavala rejoiced that he was freed from the presence of one he had injured, and the reproaches of his uncle he cared little for. An

excuse for the unceremonious departure of Inez was easily made to their guests, as she had herself taken leave of the young ladies after they retired to their apartments—informing them at the same time, that her uncle intended taking her with him to New Orleans.

Isabel knew enough to guess the cause of her departure; and Julie received her adieux with quiet politeness, without seeking a deeper motive for her conduct than she chose to avow. She regretted her departure, though she had not been able, during her whole stay at Villa d'Esperanza, to penetrate beneath the chilling exterior which Inez had worn towards her. She thought her an eccentric being, ever acting from the impulse of the moment; and she sometimes regretted that one who appeared so kindly disposed towards others, should be so cold and repelling to herself.

As Madame Zavala would be entirely alone on the departure of her guests, her son urged her to accompany them on their return to Natchez. She at length consented, and the whole party left Villa d'Esperanza at the same time.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

It was the hour of sunset, and the rich crimson clouds shed a halo of red and glowing light over the busy town of New Orleans, which even at that day was a place of considerable commercial importance. However, it is not with the busy, bustling crowd, we have to do at present. Far from the "noise, the shock, the hum of life," stood an old moss-covered mansion, several stories in height. A grove of orange trees surrounded it, and the air was laden with the perfume of their blossoms.

The sun streamed into the open door of a room panelled with oak, with niches in the walls, in which bookcases were fitted. A small table was placed near a glass door which opened on a thickly shaded garden, and beside it sat a lady considerably advanced in life. Her flowing black robes, and the rosary and cross which hung from her girdle, proclaimed her one who had renounced the pomps and vanities of the world, and vowed herself to seclusion from their temptations, though there was little of that meekness in the countenance for which we naturally look in one devoted to heaven. A prayer-book lay open before her, on which her eyes were fixed, but from the occasional start she gave whenever a footstep approached, it was evident that her mind was not occupied with the words before her.

In the deep recess of one of the windows, almost shrouded from view by the falling drapery, stood a young girl clothed in the same gloomy garb, only relieved by a white veil which was thrown back, and fell in many folds around her slight person. Her regular and chiselled features were placed in strong relief against the dark curtain which fell at her back; and as she stood pale and motionless,

with her eyes fixed on vacancy, one might have fancied her a marble image, but for the tears which rolled over her death-like features, and fell like rain at her feet.

"Daughter," said the elder lady, and something like a gleam of compassion crossed her rigid features as she looked on the drooping form of the young novice. "Daughter, I may have been too severe in my denunciations. Your penance is ended; come hither."

The girl approached, and knelt before her.

"I would not be too strict with you, my child, but your sin is a grievous one. The heart that has vowed itself to the service of heaven, should cease to indulge the feelings which bind us like bonds of iron to earth."

"Oh, mother, I have been taught that God is love. Can He then place such clinging affections in our hearts, and yet require us to sacrifice them on his altar, before we are prepared to enter the paradise over which he reigns? Must I subdue myself into a mere automaton before I am worthy to call myself his follower?"

"Alas! my daughter, your eyes are sealed to the beauty and fitness of his requirements. I would open them to a sense of his great mercies——"

"His mercies!" interrupted the novice, clasping her hands. "Ah, what have they been to me? A broken heart, and now all I ask, an early grave, is denied me."

"Child—child, this is blasphemy. Return to your station; remain there another hour, and return thanks to heaven that your penance is not more severe."

The girl made an effort to rise, but overpowered by weakness and emotion, she fell forward fainting at the feet of the Superior.

At that moment a step was heard without, and a young man attired in the Spanish uniform entered the apartment. The lady made a sign to him to stand out of view while she made efforts to restore the insensible novice. In a few moments her eyes unclosed, and with a faint shudder she attempted to release herself from the supporting arm of the Superior. She was, however, unable to stand, and was compelled to accept her assistance from the room.

While this scene passed, the new comer stood silently looking on, and many varied and painful emotions flitted over his expressive features. When the Superior returned, he eagerly asked—

"My dear aunt, what can have reduced Inez to such a state? You have not—"

"No, no, my son, I have done nothing that you would disapprove I have used all my influence to draw her mind from the contemplation of the past, to fortify her against the regrets which she so madly indulges, to the destruction of health and happiness. You know there is no hope for you, Henriquez, until she has abjured her first dream. If it were not for the desire of her uncle that she shall in time return your affection, I would cease my endeavours to break the ties which bind her to her absent relatives. She is gentle and

patient, but I much fear there is a latent firmness in her character which will baffle us all, even if she lives through the trial."

"Lives! Ah, heaven, is her life then endangered by my selfish passion? Oh, my dear aunt, I conjure you, if it adds to her unhappiness, cease to use your power over her in any way. Far rather would I pass through life unblessed by her love, than purchase it by giving another pang to that already too deeply wounded heart."

"Silly boy! would you thus idly throw from you the opportunity of possessing wealth and power? She is the darling of her uncle's heart. Gen. Zavala possesses immense wealth; he is destined at no distant day to be the first man in Mexico; and you, as the husband of his niece, may rise with him."

"Ay, madam, but you seem to forget that Col. Alwin struggles for pre-eminence in Mexico; I have seen the man, and I tell you, if I read him aright, he will brook no rival. When he has once obtained a footing there, he will compel all to bend beneath his sway. General Zavala must play a subordinate part; and his nephew, that detestable Don Pedro, will rise with his patron, even above the level of his uncle."

"But there is a way to trammel his power, or even of preventing him from acquiring the dominion over Mexico, to which he aspires."

"How?" eagerly inquired Montery.

"By intercepting the communications between Alwin and your commander. You are aware that their correspondence passes through my hands. The fate of Mexico I can decide, for at any moment it is in my power to cause this conspiracy to fall through. To promote your interest, I would not hesitate to do it. You are the last of my family, you love this girl, and the only road to the possession of power and Inez, is over the disappointed hopes of this ambitious man. Say the word, my son, and the council of Mexico shall be apprised of the plans now in agitation. I will stipulate for such a reward as will place you foremost among the men of our nation."

Don Henriquez turned away, and after a pause, said—

"Do not tempt me to be false to my country and the cause to which I am pledged."

"Mere words which mean nothing, when placed in competition with power, place, and wealth. What is existence without them? A miserable dragging through so many days of breathing nothingness, at last to end in the silence of the grave. Grasp all that comes within your power, and you will be great and honoured. Prate about conscience, and perform what you consider your duty to others, and who will thank or reward you for it? Nameless, unknown, you shall live and die; a man cursed with ambition, while he lacks the power of gratifying his longings for fame and fortune."

The young man gazed with astonishment at the excited face of the speaker.

"This from you—a professed devotee—the superior of a convent celebrated for its sanctity. I can scarcely credit what I hear."

The lips of the nun curled with a scornful smile—

"Such as I really am, you now behold me; a woman with the capacity to have ranked with an Elizabeth or a Catharine, condemned in youth to the life I have led. A curb has ever been on my spirit—a cloud on my soul—yet even here, my ambition made me the superior of all who surround me. Throughout my whole life, I have regarded you as the prop of my house, as the restorer of the honours and wealth it once possessed; and now when the means of elevating you to the station your father fell from, are within my grasp, you hesitate. Is not this American seeking to overreach us all? He would become great at the expense of every tie. Why shall you shrink from acting as other men, who live in the world and are swayed by worldly motives? Seize every advantage that offers itself without regard to others, and you may triumph over Zavala in power as well as love. Waver in your course, and he triumphs over you; even his fickle heart may resume its allegiance to his cousin, and she at last become his bride."

"Anything but that;—you have conquered, madam. Bend me to your purpose, provided you win the consent of Inez to become mine at some future day."

The temptress smiled, and promised all he desired. After an animated conversation the aunt and nephew parted; the former to sit beside the couch of the suffering Inez, and the latter to join a friend in the city.

Donna Clara de Montery was the sister of a man who had headed an unsuccessful revolt against the government of his country. He was executed, his estates confiscated, and his family degraded from the station they had occupied. His sister was on the eve of marriage with one whose high position gratified her most ambitious hopes; but when fortune forsook her, her lover proved faithless, and she retired into a convent to conceal her disappointment and mortification. Having constant communication with the clergy in Mexico, she had been selected as a fitting instrument to further the views of the conspirators, and through her hands the despatches of the two parties all passed. At first she was disposed to assist their views; but when she remembered the fate of her brother, she trembled at the possibility that her nephew might be involved in the same ruin.

While thus wavering, Gen. Zavala placed his niece under her charge. He informed her of his earnest desire to see Inez, at some future day, the wife of De Montery, and requested her to use every exertion to overcome the passion which now threatened to undermine her existence. This opened a prospect of future distinction to her nephew for which she had scarcely dared to hope; and satisfied with the position already attained by Gen. Zavala, she resolved that he should not risk the loss of all he now enjoyed, by irrevocably uniting his

fate with that of the ambitious American who sought for empire in her distracted country.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Letter from Russell to a friend.

"NEW ORLEANS, ——, 18—.

"MY DEAR DALTON:—You will be surprised to find me in this place, and will probably think me strangely troubled with migratory propensities. In truth, my mind is in such a state I cannot remain at rest.

"I informed you of my visit to the island and my return to my singular companion. Within a few days afterwards he received a communication which appeared to agitate him deeply, and he announced to me his intention to set out immediately for a Southern city, where he expected to meet some very dear friends. I of course had no inducement to remain in his hermitage after his departure, so I accompanied him to Marietta. There strange rumours reached me of conspiracy and treason, in which the name of Col. Alwin was alarmingly mingled. I heard him denounced as a traitor by many, while others appeared to view his proceedings with an indulgent eye.

"I have followed him step by step, and here I am in the emporium of the South West, gleaning all the intelligence I can, in the hope that I may be enabled to serve him materially. If possible, I would save him from the gulf into which he is about to plunge, for I can see the extent of the alarm which has seized on the authorities, and the efforts that will be made to crush him. The people appear to be quite passive, and from that I judge that the emissaries of Col. Alwin are in the city. General W. has already entered into an agreement with the commander of the Spanish forces to break up his camp on the Sabine, and orders have arrived to repair and equip for service every piece of ordnance in the city. Forts St. Charles and St. Louis are immediately to be placed in a state of defence, and orders have been sent to every important point on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, to employ the civil authority in seizing all boats and stores provided for this enterprise, and arresting all persons concerned therein.

"Since my arrival, I have lodged in the same house with a young Spaniard, who, I am certain, is an officer in General Zavala's troop, and that he is here either for the purpose of making arrangements with the commander of this post, which will seriously implicate Col. Alwin's safety, or of communicating with the agents of the latter. From some trifling circumstances I am induced to suspect that too good an understanding exists between him and W—, and some days since I traced him to the convent of Le Cœur Sacré, the Superio.

of which is his aunt. This lady, I know, is one of the persons intrusted with the communications which pass between the Spanish general and Col. Alwin. She is represented as a woman whose fiery soul has not been subdued by the restraints of conventual seclusion—as one who holds all things subordinate to her aspiring ambition. Such a woman is scarcely to be trusted.

"I have cultivated an acquaintance with Montery, who seems to be a good specimen of his nation and caste. I have learned from him that the niece of General Zavala is under the care of his aunt—and when she emerges from the walls of the convent, it will be as his bride; from some of his expressions I fancy there is some reluctance on the part of the young lady herself, which his aunt is endeavouring to overcome.

"While wandering around the grounds of the convent, a few days since, I obtained a glimpse of this secluded fair one, and a lovelier or more unhappy-looking creature could scarcely be imagined. She was leaning against a leaden statue of one of the saints, and it did not need his harsh features to act as a foil to the fair and colourless face of this interesting girl. I stood gazing on her through a broken place in the wall, without being observed, for her eyes were closed, and the expression of utter weariness and desolation, on so young a face, touched me deeply.

"A footstep startled me, and I hastily moved from the spot. The next instant I heard the voice of Montery addressing her, and she answered in a tone that touched me deeply—

"'You here again, Don Henriquez! Ah! why will you not permit me to have a moment's peace? Am I not sufficiently wretched in struggling with my own wild thoughts, without this persecution? Leave me, I conjure you, and let my heart break in silence.'

"I retreated precipitately, and his reply was lost to me. Here is food for my romance, you will say. If I had time to turn knight errant, I should be tempted to do so in favour of this young girl, and rescue her from the 'durance vile' in which she must be held.

"You will very naturally inquire what has become of my own true love, while I am dreaming of the unhappiness of the beautiful young Southerner? I answer, it is in my heart—in my soul—a portion of my very being; and spite of all appearances to the contrary, a hope yet lingers with me that I can save Julie from this dreaded marriage, and as my reward, claim her as my own.

"I saw her in a crowd as I came down the river: all my endeavours to obtain an interview were fruitless; but I managed to have a few lines conveyed to her, containing assurances of my unchanged love. The extreme delicacy of her health defers the marriage, though Zavala is impatient at the delay.

"And now, adieu; my purpose in coming hither is to serve Col. Alwin; and I lose no opportunity of gaining information, without

subjecting myself to the suspicion of being leagued with either party. Yours,

"C. Russell."

While sealing this letter, Russell was startled by an abrupt knock on the door, and the voice of De Montery demanding admittance in an excited manner.

"What brings you here at this late hour?" asked Russell, as the other entered, looking haggard and wretched.

"The wish to escape from myself," replied the Spaniard; "I know of no other reason. Come—let us walk—the air of the room oppresses me."

"You cannot surely be in earnest, De Montery. It is now nearly one o'clock. This would be a strange hour of the night to start out, in a city under military surveillance."

"No matter; I must go. If the streets are guarded, I have the pass-word. Come; will you go?

"What can be the matter with you? You are in a strange mood to-night?"

"Ha! ha! You must be unacquainted with human life if you think my mood an uncommon one. No; I tell you I am in man's most familiar mood, for is not misery more common to all than happiness? I tell you," he continued, approaching Russell, and grasping his arm convulsively, "I am this night the most wretched being this whole world contains. Oh, Russell, I am accursed!"

Russell looked on the blanched face and wandering eye of the young man, and his first thought was that he must be suffering from the delirium of sudden fever.

"Come, Don Henriquez," he said, "you are too ill to leave the house. Let me prevail on you to lie down while I send for a physician."

"A physician," he scornfully repeated. "Of what use can he be to me? Can he medicine the mind to rest? Can he take from my soul the arrow that is rankling there? If he can do this, you may bid him come, but not otherwise. No; I am not ill in body, but my mind is a chaos of dark and miserable thoughts. Sit down, and I will tell you all about it; no, not *all*, for there are some secrets in this coward soul of mine which must never be divulged, or my name will become a hissing and bye-word among honourable men."

Russell seated himself in silence, and after a pause De Montery asked—

"Have you ever loved?"

"I have."

"Then you can give me your sympathy. Yet such souls as yours, which have been taught to control their impetuous passions, cannot measure the wild emotions that master mine, I loved one who cared not for me—one who in heart and soul was devoted to another, yet I, madman that I was, allowed myself to love her as the hot in blood

and reckless in nature love. She disdained me—repulsed all my advances with the most chilling reserve. Circumstances threw her into the power of one devoted to my interests. I listened to her persuasions, to my own impetuous feelings, and the life of the woman I adored was made a bitterness to her by my persecutions. This night I went again to her abode, with the intention of using every argument to overcome her avowed indifference to me. She was not there; she had been some hours missing, and search had been made for her in vain. Oh, Russell, the most horrible suspicions fill my soul! The river—this terrible river—sweeps by the garden walls, and in despair at the persecutions which beset her on every side, Inez must have destroyed herself."

"You cannot mean that Donna Inez Zavala has found a watery grave?" exclaimed Russell, "and that *you* have driven her to it? Man—Man! do not approach nearer to me lest I forget that God is the avenger."

"Would to God that you would rid me of this wretched existence. Oh, Russell, I have stood for hours this night on the brink of this boiling current, and fancied, as the waters rushed past me, that I could hear the death-shriek of the perishing Inez mingling with their moan. Come—come with me; let us visit the same spot again. I cannot stay here; I stifle in this close atmosphere."

He threw open the door, and afraid to trust him alone in his present state of mind, Russell threw on his hat and followed him. He proceeded some distance along the dimly lighted streets in silence. At length a glare of light flashed across the pavement, and looking up, Montery saw that they were opposite a coffee-house. Pressing his hand to his brow, as if to recal his scattered thoughts, he said—

"I have an appointment here which I have forgotten. I must go in a few moments, for more than life depends on keeping it. Pray come with me; I will not detain you long."

"Don Henriquez, this is a gambling-house. What business can you possibly have here in your present state of mind?"

"Yes, I know it is a gambling-house, or what is more properly termed a hell, and therefore my state of mind qualifies me to be a fit inmate of such an abode. I do not wish to join in the amusements of the place, but I must go in. I have an appointment to meet a person here who must not be disappointed. I have papers of importance to confide to his care. Will you come?"

Russell assented, and they entered. Montery called for something to drink, and after swallowing several glasses of wine, he took the arm of his companion and led him towards the saloon for the reception of company. They crossed a narrow and imperfectly lighted passage, and threw open a door at the further end, from which issued the mingled sounds of voices, laughter, and the rattling of dice. They paused an instant on the threshold, and regarded the scene the room presented. It was brilliantly illuminated, and the windows were draped with crimson damask hangings.

The motley crowd it contained was multiplied by the reflection of large mirrors on every side. The mixture of Americans, French, and Spaniards, that filled the room, many in uniform, with an occasional masked figure, formed a scene entirely different from any to be met with in any other city in the Union. The greater portion of the company were engaged in playing different games of chance, and the entrance of the two gentlemen scarcely caused one to raise his eyes from his absorbing occupation. Russell and his companion approached a table at which a party were playing *rouge et noir*, and Montery whispered—

"Remain here while I seek him I came to see."

He complied, though determined to keep a wary eye on the movements of his companion, for he was convinced that the person Montery came to meet was connected in some way with the plans of Col. Alwin. He saw him join a tall man standing aloof from the crowd, who did not appear to take part in the amusements of the night. The upper part of his face was concealed by a mask of black silk, and a large handkerchief was tied in loose folds around his throat, as if to conceal the contour of the head as much as possible. As Montery joined him, he withdrew with him to a distant corner, and they appeared to converse earnestly together. Russell distinctly saw the young Spaniard draw a small casket from his bosom, and place it in the hands of his companion.

At length Montery rose and said—

"I must leave you now. I fear that Russell is already wearied with waiting so long for me in a scene like this."

The mask started, and eagerly inquired—

"Russell, did you say? Does he know that you came to meet me?"

"No—not the individual I was to see, though he knew that I had an appointment with some one. Why do you ask?"

"Because he is devoted heart and soul to Alwin, and must know nothing of the cause of this interview? Where does he lodge?"

"At Mrs. Smith's, in —— street."

"Ha! a singular coincidence. I went there myself this evening, but as I was not in to supper, I suppose I missed seeing him. You must not join him again—leave him to me; I have those within call who will deal with him as he deserves. I wonder how he dares to show himself openly in this city?"

"No, this must not be; he came hither at my request, and while with me no harm must befal him."

The mask mused a few moments; then, speaking as if to himself, he said—"Yes, that will answer as well."

Then addressing Montery, he continued—

"Your presence protects him to-night; but if the sun rises on him in the city, let him beware!"

He then glided away, and was soon lost amid the crowd. In the meantime Russell had watched the motions of the two with an inter-

est quickened by the vague belief that the mask was not unknown to him. He had gradually drawn nearer to them, and the last word of the stranger fell on his ear with startling distinctness. The tones of that voice were too well known to be mistaken, and, forgetful of Montery in the train of emotions it aroused, he kept his eye on the retreating figure, and hurried after him.

Pulling his hat over his brows, he followed him with rapid steps. In the outer room the mask paused, and gave some directions to a coarse-looking man, who appeared to be lounging about with no object in view. This delay gave Russell an opportunity of passing into the street without being observed, and he stood in the shadow of the wall until the other came out and proceeded down the pavement at a quick pace. He followed a short distance in the rear, revolving in his own mind the possibility of accomplishing his designs. They soon reached a cross street which was not lighted, and the mask had proceeded but a few rods, when Russell sprang forward, and grasped his arm.

"Zavala, I know you! Traitor that you are, your disguise is penetrated! My pistol is cocked, and one cry sends you to your last dark account! Give me the casket you have just received from Montery—give it instantly, or take the consequences!"

"Really, Mr. Russell," said Zavala, in a tone of surprising coolness, "I should scarcely have expected this of you. I hardly imagined that you would turn street robber, considering the station you have held. Here is the casket you are so obliging to take charge of, though I fancy you will find it a rather dangerous commission. Pray, loosen your hold on me, and suffer me to proceed; I have no fire-arms with me, and can do you no injury."

"I fear you not if you had," replied Russell, placing the casket in his bosom; "I now hold the means of convicting you of a secret league with the enemies of him you call friend! Adieu—when we meet again, you shall be known to him in your true character."

He turned away, and Zavala gazed after his retreating figure in the obscurity, and laughed scornfully as he muttered—

"'Tis well; the foolish boy rushes into the net without any endeavour on my part to ensnare him. I only intended to have him confined a short time, but he must take from me what, if found on him, will establish all the charges I wish to bring against him. Ha! ha! fortune favours me more than I had dared to hope! I must go at once to headquarters, and get a warrant for my proceedings."

In the meantime, Russell hastened towards his own lodgings, eager to examine the prize he had made. Elated with the certainty that the document he had thus obtained would suffice to convince Col. Alwin of the treachery of his pretended coadjutor, he felt confident that he had gained the means of releasing Julie from the contract made for her by her guardian.

As he approached the house in which he lodged, he was surprised to see several persons standing near the door; suspecting no danger

to himself, he passed between them, and approached the step. As he raised his hands to knock, his arms were seized from behind, and, at the same instant, a cloak was thrown over him, and held so tightly as effectually to pinion his arms and stifle his voice. Thus imprisoned, he was dragged to the corner of the street, and forced into a carriage, which was immediately driven off.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

All this had passed so rapidly, that Russell had no time for thought. After a drive of about half an hour, the carriage stopped before a large gloomy-looking building, and the cloak being removed, he was invited to descend from it by one of his conductors, a tall, powerfully made man, with an air of determination which showed that he did not permit himself to be trifled with by those under his authority.

"Tell me first why I am brought hither," said Russell. "I protest against this invasion of my rights as a free citizen of the United States."

"Why, as to rights, young Sir, I expect it's pretty much now as it's always bin; 'might makes right,' as the proverb says; so you see we bein' the strongest o' the two parties, you had better do as I tells you, quietly, and be treated with perliteness; cos if you doesn't get out when I axes you civilly, why, we'll make you do it; that's all."

To such an argument there could be no answer; and thinking it best to ensure civil treatment, Russell alighted, and entered the house. He was conducted into a spacious room nearly destitute of furniture; a flaring tallow candle stood on a dingy table; two chairs and a cot with a mattress on it completed the preparations for comfort.

"Well, stranger," said the man, "I hopes you'll be content to stay here the balance o' the night, seein' as your patience won't be much tried, as it's now nearly day. I am sorry to inform you, though, that I must trouble you for all you have in your pockets, as it's the rule when a man's tuck up to examine what he has in his possession. Seein' as how you are suspected of 'spiracy, as they call it, I'm bound to take your plunder. Come, shell out at oncet, and be done with the job."

"I must first know by what right you make this demand; seized in the night, and brought here by force, how do I know that your object is not to commit a robbery?"

"I has but one answer to make to you, stranger, and that is what I said before, that might makes right. Them that sent me to 'rest you knowed well enough what they was arter, so if you don't shell out mighty quick, I'll call in them as doesn't stand on their good manners, as I do."

"I suppose there is no alternative then," said Russell. "The

contents of my pockets are of little value; such as they are, you are welcome to a sight of them."

"Hem—a penknife, pencil, purse, (nearly empty, though,) handkerchief, gloves; little enough considerin'. You are welcome to all these back again, young gentleman; but I will trouble you for the box what is in the breast pocket of your coat."

"Box—what box do you mean?" inquired Russell, with a fearful consciousness of the results which might follow the discovery of a treasonable correspondence on his person.

"I know it is there, Sir," said the man, with imperturbable gravity, "for I felt it when I was a foldin' the cloak over you. You may jist as well hand it over to me for safe keepin'."

"But it does not belong to me. I have no right to trust it out of my own hands."

"I shall jist take it then, ef that will be an ease to your conscience; and I'll also trouble you for the pistol that I see a peepin' out from under your coat. It would be useless to try to defend that ere box with it, unless you want to go to t'other country faster than I take it a chap like you would care to go. Come, Sir, hand 'em over at oncet; I'm mortal tired o' all this here palaverin' about nothin' at all, arter all."

Bitterly conscious of the utter impossibility of refusing these demands, Russell drew the casket forth, saying, as he delivered it to the man—

"Remember, Sir, this outrage is inflicted at your peril. When the efforts of my friends have released me from this unlawful imprisonment, this violation of my liberties shall be severely punished."

"I ain't afraid for myself, stranger. Them that pays me for it has to bear the blunt, I s'pose, if any evil should come of it."

"And who are they?" demanded the prisoner.

"Well, I reckon I ain't such a gumphead as to tell you that, stranger, so I'll bid you good night, and hope you'll have pleasant dreams till mornin'."

So saying, he coolly walked out, locking the door after him, leaving the prisoner to his own reflections. These were anything but agreeable. Just as he had fancied himself in possession of the means of serving one who was very dear to him, and at the same time of securing the fondest wishes of his soul, to be thus suddenly circumvented, was more than he could bear with calmness. He examined every portion of the room, hoping some means of escape might be found; but the walls were several feet thick, and the windows, in deep recesses, were closely barred with iron.

Morning soon dawned, and with it came his captor of the previous night, bringing with him coffee and a plate of food.

"I hope you have an appetite for your breakfast this mornin', Sir Them as employed me to 'rest you will soon be here, and I thought I would rouse you up, but I see you hasn't been in bed yet."

"No—I felt no inclination to sleep, and I have still less for food.

"Allow me, Sir, to pervail on you to take a cup o' this here coffee, any how. You'll find it the best thing in nater for low sperrits or any ailment in that line."

Russell was persuaded to take a cup of the smoking liquid, and felt a little refreshed by it. Finding him disinclined to converse, the man departed, and very soon afterwards a bustle was heard without, which appeared to indicate an arrival of some importance.

The door of his prison was thrown open, and Zavala entered, followed by an officer wearing the uniform of an American General. Russell knew, before he was named, that he stood in the presence of the military chieftain who then held undisputed sway in New Orleans. An additional seat was brought in, and Zavala commanded the man who brought it to retire, and station himself near the door, while they remained with the prisoner.

"Mr. Russell," said the General, "I must express my sorrow at finding a young gentleman of your intelligence and former standing leagued with a traitor, who would betray the interests of the land of his birth."

"If by a traitor you mean Col. Alwin, Sir, I assure you I am not one of his followers, and of his plans I am entirely ignorant, except such as were explained to me by Don Pedro Zavala. He knows full well that I have never had any participation in them, and I am at a loss to account for the violent measures which have been pursued against me."

"Methinks you have little forethought, young man. One carrying about his person such documents as these can scarcely deny what they conclusively prove."

He produced the casket, and opening it, displayed the contents.

"Here, Sir, are duplicates of all the letters which have passed between General Zavala and Col. Alwin, besides other papers of importance. What is your reply to such evidence of an intimate collusion with the arch traitor I am endeavouring to circumvent?"

Russell's lip curled—

"Nothing, Sir, but that I am innocent of the charge, as no one can better testify than the man who accompanies you. That casket, with its contents, I wrested from him last night. I did not know the purport of the papers until you informed me of it, but I was certain they were of such a character as would afford me the means of unmasking a villain. Nay, Don Pedro, you need not start and lay your hand so menacingly on your dagger; *this* is neither time nor place for such an evidence of resentment. A more fitting one may yet be found, when you shall answer to me for this lawless infringement of my liberty."

"Be it so," replied Zavala through his closed teeth. "You shall never escape me a *second* time."

"Peace—peace, Zavala; this is no hour for threats. For you, Mr. Russell, I am sorry to inform you that your improbable account of the manner in which you came in possession of these papers, does

not impose on me. The artifice is too shallow to deceive one accustomed to deal with men of the world. Don Pedro had my warrant to arrest you, and have you placed in confinement."

A deep flush passed over Russell's face.

"I am your prisoner, Sir, or you dare not offer this insult to me. If falsehood there be, it is on the side of your *friend* there, and not on mine. As to your authority for causing my arrest, I shall be glad to learn from what source you derived it. In a land which boasts of its liberty, how do you dare to usurp the power of imprisoning any man by military authority, for committing a civil offence? Even if guilty of this charge, by what right do you cause me to be arrested?"

"By the right of the strong over the weak," replied Zavala, with a malicious smile, while the commander sat speechless with rage, at what he considered the insolence of the prisoner.

"I find, Sir," he at length said, "that you are more audacious than I supposed you would dare to be, when resting under a charge of such serious import. I shall take prompt measures for your security until your principal is in my power. Good morning, Sir; I hope, in silence and solitude, you may repent of the outrages you are ready to commit against a peaceful community. You may learn from reflection how to act more discreetly in the future."

"If by acting discreetly, you mean betraying the cause to which I may have pledged myself through good or evil fortune, I am afraid I shall benefit but little by it. Were I an adherent of Col. Alwin's, as both you and Zavala have once been, I would scorn to betray his cause; but Don Pedro knows full well that I refused to join him at his own solicitations. You may keep me imprisoned, because my friends are not informed of my position; but you will do it at your peril. You know this stretch of your authority to be unconstitutional, and punishable with the heaviest penalties."

"These penalties can never reach me," said the commander, as he walked towards the door. "Come, Zavala, we linger too long with this insulting boy."

"I will follow you instantly," replied Zavala, rising. Suddenly bending his head towards Russell, he said, in a low tone, "You are in my toils, and before you are freed from them, Julie will be mine. I go now to claim her."

Before Russell could reply, the door had closed on his retreating form, leaving him alone to wrestle with his impatient and irritating thoughts as he best could.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The cheek of Julie was beginning to wear once more the hue of health, for a latent hope had sprung up in her heart that the marriage which had been so long postponed, would be finally given up

altogether. She little knew how sedulously that languid form was watched—how jealously each rose hue that tinged her pallid cheek, was regarded by the determined lovers. Never for one moment had he wavered in his determination to make her his own at all hazards; and to the remonstrance of Dr. Crawford alone, she owed this interval of tranquillity which enabled her youth to triumph over the severe shock her constitution had received in that long illness. Julie saw Zavala apparently co-operating with her guardian, while she appeared to have become a secondary object with him; and believing that he had at last been disgusted by her coldness, she would have succeeded in liking him as a friend, if she had not feared him. Yet Zavala watched the re-animating effects of scene on that drooping form with a deepening interest, determined not to lose the reward of his toils—his sacrifices; for to his own conscience he called the broken heart of his youthful companion a sacrifice for the attainment of Julie.

After a visit to New Orleans, from which he returned in great elation, he sought an interview with Miss de Bourg, and demanded the fulfilment of her pledge, leaving it with herself to name an early day. She made a last appeal to his honour, his generosity, and any other heart than Zavala's would have been touched; but his answer convinced her at once of the fallacy of her hopes. Since the sacrifice must be made, she felt the uselessness of endeavouring to protract the term of her freedom, and her quivering lips named the day which was to consign her to a fate she had deprecated by every means in her power.

Zavala retired to his room with the triumphant thought that he was at last conqueror in this long struggle; he was reckless of the anguish he had beheld in that pallid face, although it seemed to him he could yet feel the icy touch of the cold hand, when her guardian had placed it in his own, with the assurance that within another week it should irrevocably be his.

It was midnight, and the deep silence was only broken by the unwritten melodies of nature which filled the air with their music. He arose, and unclosing the French window that opened on the yard, he stepped out beneath the starry sky, and wandered into the garden. The remembrance of Inez came darkly between him and the newer love; and in spite of his efforts to escape from them, the thoughts of other days crowded through his mind. He threw himself beneath the shadow of a large tree, and yielded himself to their dominion. Suddenly a voice, which seemed to respond to them, arose from a thicket of shrubbery which grew at a short distance; and a few bars from an old Spanish ballad, which had been familiar to him from childhood, were uttered in tones of such sweet yet mournful melody, as to touch even his heart. He started up, and beholding the fluttering of what appeared to be a white robe among the trees, he instantly pursued it. The lower part of the garden terminated in a deep bayou, overhung with trees and flowering vines. As he

gained fast on the figure he had seen, it retreated towards this bayou, while, at intervals, the same wild notes rang upon his ear. Suddenly they ceased, and the form vanished. He rubbed his eyes, and looked, but nothing was before him save the tall, dark trees. He approached the edge of the bayou, and gazed eagerly in, but nothing was visible in the dark chasm.

The rumbling of distant thunder, and several vivid flashes of lightning, warned him to depart, as a storm was brewing which threatened soon to burst with all the violence peculiar to the climate. He hastened to the house, but his thoughts pursued him, and drove sleep from his pillow. Those mournful tones still rang through his spirit, and in the pauses of the wild storm which raged without, he fancied that he could again hear the wailing of those heart-breaking tones.

Morning dawned clear and beautiful; and but for the scattered boughs of trees, the flowers crushed and beaten down, the fences in many places prostrate, no one would have supposed that a storm of such fearful violence had so recently defaced the fair face of nature. A rapid stream was rushing through the bayou, and several large trees had been hurled from their station, and lay toppling in the chasm. The earth in many places had yielded beneath the violent torrent of rain, and large masses had fallen in.

Zavala sought the place at which the nocturnal singer disappeared. Scarcely had he arrived at the spot, when he descried Julie and Isabel approaching from the opposite direction. They had been viewing the devastations of the storm, and Isabel was grieving over the destruction of some rare plants she had been rearing.

They drew near the precipitous edge of the bayou, and looked down on the turbid stream below. A large tree had been uprooted just at that spot, and had fallen across the chasm. Beside its trunk was what appeared to be a dark heap of clothing, and from it was extended a small white hand, which grasped a sapling that had been torn from its place. Isabel was foremost, and her quick eye caught sight of this appalling object first. She grew deathly pale, and recoiled from her dangerous position.

"What is it?" asked the conscience-stricken Zavala, with a painful contraction of the heart. "Why are you so pale?"

"Look, look!" she murmured, pointing to the object which had excited a fearful foreboding in her bosom.

"Great God!" exclaimed Zavala, springing down the bank to the spot on which lay the form of a girl evidently dead. A single glance revealed the truth. There lay the corpse of the young Inez, clothed in the dress of a Sister of Charity; her dark eyes closed, and her fair cheek scarcely paler from the touch of death. Her white veil had fallen from her head, and lay beside her.

When Zavala had seen her so suddenly disappear, she must have lost her footing on the edge of the bayou, and have been precipitated to the ledge of earth on which she was found. A bruise

was on her temple, and the slight sapling she held was grasped so tightly, that every attempt to loosen her hold on it was unavailing.

And thus had she perished! the young, the beautiful, the gifted Inez! Zavala raised her in his arms and bore her from the spot, and his bitter tears bathed the marble brow of her he had so lightly forsaken.

"Oh, for one gleam of light from those darkened eyes," he muttered, as he swiftly threaded his way to the house; "for one throb to this pulseless heart, and I would sacrifice every ambitious hope of my life. Oh, Inez, Inez, my sweet Inez! how shall I answer this to my mother! Too late do I feel how unlike thy spirit was to mine."

He encountered Madame Zavala at the door.

"My son, what have you there?" she asked, in alarm.

"Look, look and see," he wildly exclaimed. "'Tis one you have loved passing well. Mother, curse me not, if you can help it: I dreamed not that it would ever come to this;" and he laid his lifeless burden at the feet of his horror-stricken parent.

"How, oh! how did this occur?" said Madame Zavala, kneeling, and raising the pallid brow to her bosom. "Oh, Inez, Inez, my child, my beautiful, must I part from thee, and thus!"

She convulsively pressed the dead girl to her heart, and kissed her cold lips. When she understood how it must have occurred, she turned to her son, and said—

"Leave my sight, that I may not in this hour of suffering forget that you are my child. I would not curse you, for you are my only one; but when I look on this being that you were bound by every tie of honour to cherish and protect, and know that she is a victim to a love which was sought and then cruelly slighted, what shall I say to you, oh false, false to the faith and truth of manhood! Leave me! leave me!"

Zavala obeyed in silence, for his heart was wrung with remorse and sorrow for the fate of her he had once loved with an affection he had then imagined as lasting as life. Inez was removed within the house, and in the folds of her robe was found a letter addressed to Madame Zavala. It ran thus:—

"My dearest Aunt.—I have been near you, though you knew it not. For many nights have I hovered around your dwelling, and listened to the tones of your beloved voice, and I return with a sad, though chastened spirit, to the duties which I have voluntarily imposed on myself. In ministering to the sufferings of others, I shall learn to bear my own sorrows with resignation.

"I have left the convent of Le Cœur Sacré, and placed myself under the protection of the Bishop of New Orleans, who has permitted me to enroll myself among the Sisters of Charity.

"To Zavala bear my forgiveness, and my sincere wishes for his happiness: I can do no more. When time has blunted my feelings,

and I can bear to look on the past with calmness, I will seek you again, and I trust we may meet in happiness.

"INEZ."

"Yes, beloved child," said Madame Zavala, with a fresh burst of sorrow, "we will meet in Heaven, where neither falsehood nor sorrow shall dim the ray of glory which shall encircle the brow of my innocent, forsaken Inez."

The sorrow of age is more affecting than that of youth; because we are unaccustomed to see those around whom the stoicism of years has erected its barriers, yield to its influence. Madame Zavala was inconsolable. She confined herself to her own apartment, and refused even to admit her son.

Late in the evening Julie entered the room in which Inez lay, to take a last look at the hapless girl, before the coffin-lid was screwed down, which was to shut out so much beauty and gentleness from the gaze of affection. She started as she beheld Zavala, with a pale brow and strongly compressed lips, standing beside the dead. She approached, and stood near him in silence.

"Julie," he at length said, in a hollow and unnatural tone, "behold what *I* have done. See the ruin I have wrought to gain you. But for *you* she had not died."

"I can pity and forgive you at this moment, Don Pedro," said Julie, sorrowfully. "Just now your sufferings must be sufficiently keen, without a word from me to increase them. I know the history of her who lies before us. I know all her desolation, and this ruin was wrought in pursuit of one who has often assured you she can never love you. Now hear me vow, beside the corse of the being you have so carelessly sacrificed, that no earthly power shall ever force me to fulfil the contract my guardian has hitherto forced on me. Never shall my hand be clasped as a wedded bride by one who has thus cast from him the being he had taught to look up to him with affection, to rely on him as her stay and refuge. Your mother has told me all: wonder not, then, that I here break our engagement, and in so doing, recover my long coveted freedom."

She turned to leave the room, but he caught her hand. "Stop, stay, Julie! Listen to me one moment, I implore you. Do me the justice to believe that if I had known how deeply seated was this unfortunate passion, I would never have sought another. I would have sacrificed my feelings—indeed I would. Oh, Julie, forsake me not now! My remorse, my agony, will be greater for being the cause of this ruin, and all in vain! Was it not for you that I slighted her? for you that I relinquished the passionate love of a creature so gentle, so bright?"

"If I had ever loved you, I might be wrought on to remember all this," replied Julie, affected by the anguish of his tone; "but when I know that she was wasting her soul away in vain regrets, while you forced a chilled and revolted heart to accept you, I cannot

forgive it. No; my spirit can claim no communication with yours. Henceforth our paths are separate."

A horrible convulsion passed over the dark features of Zavala. He grasped her hand with painful force, and drew her nearer to himself, as he said in a suffocated tone—

"Stay, and hear *me* in my turn. Julie de Bourg, I have borne enough from you, and I will now make you quail before a spirit that can master yours. Hear me by the side of my *victim*, if you will; hear me swear that I will not lose my reward. You *shall* be mine, if I move all the powers of earth to accomplish my purpose. I have the means, and I will use them. Think not to escape me, girl! As well may the timid bird expect to escape the coils of the snake that twines its folds around it, as you escape from me. If you have the feelings of a woman, if you are not a second Tullia, ready to grasp at your own wishes over the prostrate body of him you call father, I have you in my power, and you cannot evade me."

His face was distorted with passion, and his eye gleamed on her with the lurid fire of a demon's gaze. With a faint cry of terror, Julie exclaimed—

"Release me! Let me go!"

"Ha, ha! So you're frightened. Go; I will no longer detain you. But I bid you *remember!*" And as his white lips emphasized the last word, the fixed expression of that awful face chilled her to the very soul.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It was late at night. A misty rain was falling, and the few lamps which endeavoured to penetrate the gloom, gleamed faint and dim through the hazy atmosphere. The hush of midnight was over the silent city, and no sound interrupted the stillness save the occasional challenge of the sentinel, which showed that the place was still under military authority.

A solitary figure, wrapped in the heavy folds of a Spanish cloak, emerged from a cross street, and stood a few moments near one of the lamps, for the purpose of consulting his watch.

"Past twelve," he muttered. "'Tis later than I thought. I must hurry."

Quickening his pace, he took the way which led towards the Levee. A sentinel was stationed in the shadow of a wall which ran parallel with the river. As the stranger approached, he challenged him, and a short colloquy ensued; the soldier again withdrew to the shelter of the wall, followed by his new companion; and taking a box of matches from his pocket, he struck a light.

"Show me the pass, and if all is right I will conduct you to his abode."

A piece of paper was handed to him, which he scrutinized attentively. He then returned it, as he said—

"This is genuine; follow me."

They proceeded at a rapid pace the distance of several squares, and stopped before a heavy old-fashioned mansion, built in the Spanish style.

"This is the residence of the commander," said the soldier, "and now for the promised reward, for I have risked much in leaving my post."

Several pieces of gold were given him, and the stranger rang at the gate, which was placed in a massive brick wall that surrounded the house. In a few moments it was unclosed by a Catholic priest, who carried a small lamp in his hand.

"What do you wish at this late hour?" he asked.

'I must see Gen. W——."

"He has retired, and cannot receive you."

"My business is urgent. Take this paper to him, and tell him that the bearer must have an interview with him immediately."

"Follow me," said the priest, leading the way across a narrow court into a small room panelled with dark wood, which the feeble light of the lamp only rendered more gloomy.

"Wait here a few moments, and I will inform Gen. W—— of your request."

The stranger paced the floor impatiently, and as the light flashed on his thoughtful face, one might have read there the stern and bitter feelings which were careering through his bosom. Some moments elapsed before the priest returned and informed him that the commander would see him.

Following his conductor through a wide hall, a door at the furthest end was thrown open, and he entered a large, well-lighted room, handsomely fitted up. W—— courteously advanced to meet him, and offered him a seat. The stranger waved it back, and said—

"Let the priest leave us, and I will reveal myself."

As the door closed on his retiring form, the new comer dropped the cloak which had shrouded his form, and doffing his cap, stood with his stern and fixed features in the full glare of light.

"Alwin!" exclaimed the other, recoiling a few steps. "What brings you hither in so mysterious a manner?"

"Treachery," replied he, in a deep, stern tone. "The deepest, basest treachery."

"And from whom? What—what can you mean?" stammered the conscious general."

"Mean! What should I mean but to expose a dastard, and then avenge his cowardly desertion of the cause which he had sworn to sustain!"

"My good friend, you use strange language. Pray explain yourself. I do not understand your denunciations."

A bitter smile curled the lip of Alwin

"Practise your deceptions on those who can be deceived by them. I am not one of the besotted crew. I have trusted you with what was dearer to me than life itself, and you have played me false. I believed you one who, though treacherous to the government that employed him, would yet be honest to me, because the reward I offered was great. Speak not, Sir, but hear me. You are conspiring with my enemies, not only to compass my downfal, but to ensure my destruction."

"On my life—on my soul—I am still, as ever, devoted to your true interests," replied the trembling general.

"I know not what you may consider my *true* interests, Sir," said Alwin, in a tone of cool irony. "I only know that you are thwarting my plans, arresting my friends, and using military authority to accomplish things to my detriment, which the laws will not justify. All this, too, after being pledged to sustain my cause."

A smile crossed the features of W——.

"Ah, my friend, how is it possible that you can so misunderstand my actions? These things I have done merely to blind the executive; only to —"

"Silence, Sir, and do not stain your cowardly soul with another falsehood. Look here, and here, and here." As he spoke, he drew several packets from his pockets, with heavy seals affixed to them. The commander visibly turned pale as they met his glance.

"Here, Sir, lie the proofs of your treachery. Here are copies of your negotiations with the Spanish authorities. Your agreement with them to betray my cause for a specified sum of money, and more than all, here is a copy of your letter to the Commandant of the British armament stationed at Jamaica, calling on him to refuse all aid or co-operation with me. Now, Sir, what have you to say in answer to such proofs of treachery."

W—— cowered before the eagle glance which seemed to pierce into his very soul. He tried to return it with an unblenching gaze, but his eye sank before that of his accuser, and after a pause he answered—

"You cannot blame me for adhering to the orders of government, when I found they could no longer be evaded with safety to myself. I have been convinced, by observation, that your projects can never succeed, and I concluded that the only safe course for me was to redeem the pledge I made to my country, when I put on the uniform of her defenders."

"And the uniform of your country was never more disgraced in the person of its wearer. But 'tis idle to talk, Sir. I came to you to convict you of double-dealing, and to demand of you the release of my personal friends, who have been arrested by you. If other means fail, I came to use force to discover the place of Charles Russell's confinement. A writ for his release has already been obtained, and he has iniquitously been concealed where his friends cannot find him. Speak, tell me at once, or take the consequences."

As he spoke, Alwin drew from his bosom a pistol, and levelled it at his companion. The commander knew the man he had to deal with, and grew deathly pale, as he said—

"This—this is strange conduct, Col. Alwin; very strange, I must say. You certainly take a most extraordinary course to obtain information. As I am not prepared to resist your murderous intentions, I must submit to necessity, and inform you of the place of Russell's confinement. He is not in the city; he has been placed on board of a vessel, and sent down the river."

"What vessel, and by whom commanded?"

"The Swan, Captain Long."

"Write an order for his release from the power of your emissaries."

He obeyed in silence.

"Now, two more for the liberation of —— and —— from the prison in this city."

"Any further demands?" inquired the commander, with a sneer, as he handed over the papers.

"None, Sir," replied Alwin, quietly, replacing the pistol in his bosom. "I have only to inform you that your machinations are known to me, and the early information I received of your treachery enabled me to take such measures as will materially assist me in the accomplishment of my own views. Your despatches have been intercepted, and conveyed to me; and the authority from government, which you are compelled to wait for, will arrive too late to arrest my progress. Good night, Sir,—my purpose in coming hither is fulfilled, and my escape from your toils is certain."

He bowed, and left the room. The priest was in the hall with a light, and in a few moments he found himself beyond the walls, breathing the fresh air of early morning.

As the door closed on his retiring figure, W—— dashed his hands against his breast, exclaiming:—

"Who could have foreseen this? Discovered, baffled at every turn; yet methinks there may yet be a hope of circumventing him. Every energy shall be exerted to bring down destruction on his head."

The priest returned.

"Hurry, good father, to the mayor of the city, then to Judge ——, and inform them that the arch-traitor Alwin has just been with me; and if they are prompt in their movements, he can yet be arrested. I will stretch my authority to the utmost, to succeed in confining him until the time for success is past."

"Why did you not arrest him when he was with you?" asked the priest.

"Because I am so deeply compromised with him, that I dare not appear openly in the matter. He knew this well, or he would never have ventured alone in my quarters."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The day had been dark and rainy; the clouds were still driving before the wind, with here and there a speck of the blue heaven, giving doubtful promise of a clear evening. A horseman was riding along the high bluff which commands a bird's eye view of the Mississippi. He took the road leading towards the Devil's Punch Bowls. It was bare and rough for more than a mile, with little to vary its monotony, except an occasional view of the wide sweep of waters from bend to bend of the mighty river, rolling by on their everlasting course; their restless, eddying motion, a fit type of the existence of those who struggled through "life's fitful fever" on its banks.

Three immense rifts, separated by a narrow tongue of land extending from fifty to eighty feet towards the river, were before him. Down—down, as far as the eye could penetrate into the dim depths, which appeared almost interminable, the sides were thickly clothed with the gloomy pine, mingled with various kinds of shrubs peculiar to the country.

"What shall I do next?" muttered the equestrian, as he dismounted and secured the bridle of his horse to the bough of a tree. "I see no vestige of a house, or hovel of any kind. I *must* see her; yet if she plays me false, by heaven! I will make her pay dearly for it."

He proceeded along the narrow promontory before him, carefully examining the ravine on either hand, to detect some traces of a human habitation, but he could perceive none. A tree scathed by lightning stood at the extremity of the point, and mounting into it, he resolved to take a wider survey of the scene; and Zavala, (for he it was,) though a man of the world, and one who had never communed with nature in her loveliness and magnificence, had yet some sparks of a divine origin which enabled him to appreciate the beauty of the view which burst on his sight.

The clouds had rolled away, and the broad bosom of the river reflected the purple and flame-coloured hues of a most gorgeous sunset. The high bluff sloped gradually towards the water's edge, clothed with luxuriant vegetation. A wide level tract on the opposite bank presented an unbroken forest, above whose tops in the far distance were seen the waters of Lake Concordia, gleaming in the sunbeams as a sheet of silver. Zavala looked into the gloomy depths beneath him, and thought the force of contrast was not needed to enable him to appreciate the beauty of the scene he had so unexpectedly encountered.

He was about to abandon his search, when he heard the faint chanting of a human voice, which appeared far below him. Hastily descending from his lofty station, he followed the direction of the sound; within a few yards of the tree, he discovered a rude pathway winding down the face of the bluff, and after a difficult descent of more than fifty feet, he came to a ledge of earth about ten feet

wide, in front of a wretched hovel, which had been partially cut out of the side of the bluff, and partly made of the boughs of trees laid across a rude framework of wood. The dense forest grew close around it, and through the interlacing limbs of trees, glimpses of the Mississippi were obtained—the only bright object amid the darkness of desolation that reigned in this gloomy spot, into which even the sun appeared never to penetrate.

With a shudder he in vain endeavoured to repress, Zavala approached the hovel, and looked around to discover signs of its being inhabited. A rough door closed the entrance, and the visitor knocked long and loudly, after vainly endeavouring to open it. The singing had long since ceased, and many moments elapsed before any reply was made to his obstreperous demands for admittance. At length, a harsh voice spoke and inquired—

"What do you want? Who are you?"

Zavala evidently recognised the voice, for he said impatiently,

"What does this foolery mean, woman? Am I not here by your own appointment, on business of importance?"

"True," was the reply, as the person addressed slowly unbarred the door. "But the business does not concern me—'tis of your own seeking, and you might wait my pleasure, without such uncivil behaviour, young man. Enter the abode of wretchedness, and be brief in your communications, for my time is too precious to be wasted on such as you."

Without noticing the latter part of her speech, Zavala entered the miserable shelter. The single apartment was about twelve feet long, and but little more than half that in width: a rude fire-place was at one end, in which a few embers glowed, and over them was a small iron pot, in which something appeared to be cooking. A wooden bench and a pile of straw in one corner covered by a blanket, was all the furniture the place could boast.

The woman motioned to him to take the seat, and crossing her hands on her breast, she leaned her tall time-worn figure against the wall. She wore no cap, and her gray hair was hanging wild, over her stern and strongly marked features. Zavala looked at her some moments in silence.

"Why do you sit there and gaze at me? Why do you not speak out at once, and tell me what is your business with an old helpless creature like me?"

"Good madam, do not be angry—I am weary and out of breath, with this infernal road I had to scramble over. Permit me to rest a few moments, while you inform me what you did with those papers I intrusted to your care, three weeks since."

"I performed your bidding. I found the man waiting at the cross roads, and I delivered them to him with the injunction not to spare horse-flesh until they were in the city of Washington, and in the President's hands. What else should I do with them, pray? Do you think I would fail in my errand, when it was to draw down

ruin on *him*, the hated, the perjured? I could destroy him without your assistance, but I have refrained for the sake of one who had never met with justice from him; yet he would be involved in his disgrace, if I revealed *my* knowledge."

"What do you mean by such allusions?" asked Zavala, with awakened curiosity. "Has Col. Alwin ever injured you?"

"Has he injured me?" repeated the woman wildly—"Is it injury to the green and flourishing tree, when the whirlwind tears it from its native soil? Is it injury to the blooming flower, to crush it under foot? Is it injury to the human heart, to tear from it its last earthly stay? To destroy the being whose infancy you had watched over—that had smiled in your eyes when its young soul was unstained by sin; that had learned its first lispings from your lips? If this be injury, such have I endured from him. He it was who made me what I am; a miserable cumberer of the earth. An evil and a cursed heart has he given me, and I would requite him in kind."

Zavala cowered before the glare of insanity which lit up her eyes, as she uttered the causes of her hatred. Observing how much he was startled, she strode towards him and grasped his arm with force, as she said—"What do you fear? A craven soul must surely inhabit your strong frame, or you would not thus shrink before a woman. Do you think I would attempt to harm you, through whose means I hope to gain that vengeance I have panted for, for years? The blood of my lost, my 'beautiful, my brave,' is rusting on *his* dagger, and cries aloud for retaliation. Think you a mother's heart can hear that cry and not respond to it from its inmost depths? Blood for blood is the law of man, but I seek not for blood—what to his unbending soul would be the death agony, in comparison with what he has inflicted on me? No! I would have him feel the vulture at his heart; see his honours wither from his grasp; his soul bowed by disappointments and affliction; and when, in the hour of his agony, he calls on that God whose laws he has trampled on and insulted, I would have his face turned from him in wrath. I would make him a mark for the finger of scorn to point at—then—then, I would be beside him, to hiss my curses in his ear, and ask him if they have fallen?"

While she spoke, the woman had wrought herself up to a pitch of phrensy that might have alarmed one of stronger nerves than Zavala possessed. She strode up and down the floor with heavy and rapid steps; her lips parted, and her whole face wearing an expression of concentrated passion which was truly terrible. He at length spoke.

"My good woman, I did not come here to hear you rail at Col. Alwin, but to transact business of importance. Night will soon fall, and I must get out of this cuckoo's nest before it is too dark to find my way."

"True," replied Theresa, for the reader has doubtless recognised the fortune-teller. "Very true, and I have no wish to detain you

here longer than is absolutely necessary. I take no pleasure in the sight of a traitor, for such are you to him you call your friend. What in me is a virtue, is in you the crime of ingratitude to one who has made you his bosom counsellor, and trusted you in all things."

"How! Do you dare to taunt me, wretched outcast?" he said angrily, as he laid his hand on the hilt of his dagger.

Theresa laughed scornfully.

"Ay—use it on a woman! Let your proud Spanish blood exult in the thought that you are more than a match for an old and defenceless one. Tush, boy! I am in no mood for foolery now—speak—what would you with me?"

Zavala felt that anger would be absurd, and he drew a packet forth which was carefully secured.

"You informed me that you could obtain a messenger, who could be trusted, to convey these papers to the seat of government. The mail from this place is too uncertain; they are of great importance, and must go by a safe hand."

"For the reward you offered, there is one who will do your bidding. I answer for his integrity, and you cannot doubt my desire to see them go safely to their destination."

Zavala opened his pocket-book, and gave her several bills.

"Here is something more than the sum specified, and here is another for your own reward."

His companion drew back, and with a gesture of contempt refused the money.

"Keep your worldly trash—it brings no blessing with it. The assistance I have rendered you is not for love to you or your cause, but from undying hatred to Alwin. For years I have trodden in his footsteps, and whenever we met, I rang my curses in his ears. If I can be the instrument of his downfal, I shall think that God is just. Adieu—your bidding shall be quickly done."

With the gesture of a queen dismissing her court, she waved her hand to him to retire.

CHAPTER XL.

Zavala had scarcely left the hovel of Theresa, when another figure darkened the entrance. This person was muffled in a large cloak, and his hat was drawn so far over his brows as effectually to conceal his features. In a clear pleasant voice he said—

"A good even to you, good mother."

The woman started, and looked eagerly at the stranger—she slowly uttered—

"That voice speaks to me in the music of other days, and memories linked with passion, crime, and wretchedness, come crowding to my soul as I hear its old familiar tones. Speak—who are you?"

"I am one you have before met," replied the intruder, as he dropped his cloak, and removed his hat.

"Ah, I know you now," said Theresa, as the faint and imperfect light from the open door fell on his pale, yet handsome features.

"I recognise you as one in whom I have ever taken the deepest interest—for one in whose behalf, even I have wearied Heaven with prayers. Raise your face to mine, son of the beloved and lost. Ah! 'tis so like—so proud—so noble—you inherit her scornful lips and flashing eye."

"From whom do I inherit such gifts, Theresa?"

"Ah, boy—boy—there are wild secrets in my heart. The tide of outraged feeling has swept over it, and destroyed all that was soft, or bright, or womanly; and, God help me, I sometimes think a cord in my brain has been too rudely jarred. You are strangely like one I loved in years long past: one over whose bright head I saw the rushing waters close; but whose young heart had been crushed long before."

"Your hints are dark, Theresa, and I have long sought you, in the belief that you can give me the clue to a history it is my right to know, yet which has been refused to me from another source. I am ignorant of the nature of the tie between you and Col. Alwin; but that his early life is known to you, I have good reason to believe. Enlighten me on one portion of it, and I shall be eternally grateful: I will be to you an unfailing friend to the last hour of your existence. Can you tell me the fate of Aileen Clifton?"

"Who calls that name, which for twenty years has never been uttered in my presence? Who is it that asks me to rend the veil from the bitter past?" asked Theresa vacantly, as if forgetful of the identity of the person before her.

"It is her son who asks, who implores you to cast some light on her unhappy fate."

"How have you learned that you are the son of that much injured lady? Has Alwin revealed the secret of your parentage at last?"

"He has, and I now come to you for the details his emotion would not suffer him to give."

"His emotion!" repeated the woman scoffingly. "As well may you pierce the marble image with your dagger, and say it shrinks with pain. As well say the clouds are rent with anguish when they descend in rain. Tush, boy—I *know him:* speak not to me of his feeling for any mortal thing save himself, or that dainty piece of flesh I see flaunting by on her gay steed, with her dark plumes floating back on the wind. Why is his heart cold to you, when he regards her with such affection? When I bore you to him, you were as winning—as lovely a child as this girl. Your mother was as fair, ay, fairer than hers. Why then does he cast off his son, while his daughter is so tenderly watched over?"

"I remind him of what he would willingly forget," replied Russell,

gloomily. "My mother's fate is the dark spot in the past; and he does not love what recals the shadows of his life. My good Theresa, I pray you, relate her history, and set my mind at rest."

"I will, boy. You shall know all, and then see what you will think of this high-minded, feeling father of yours."

She took a lamp from a shelf over the fire-place; lighted it at the embers, and placed it on the floor beside the pile of straw which served her as a bed. Then requesting Russell to occupy the bench, she threw her tall form on the straw, half reclining, half leaning against the wall, and commenced the following narration:—

"I must begin with my own history, for it is so interwoven with that of your mother that without some knowledge of mine, you cannot understand my story. Miserable, degraded, as I now seem, I was reared in luxury, and was once fondly beloved by tender relatives. I am the daughter of a British officer, and the widow of a merchant of Montreal. I had an intimate friend in girlhood, who, from her cradle, was destined to take the veil. Her parents were French Catholics, and wished to make their daughter a sacrifice to their bigotry and superstition. Her heart recoiled from the fate they would have imposed on her, and she fled from her paternal home, while yet almost a child in years, with one she loved. Her parents refused to forgive her, and in a few years she fell a victim to remorse and the unkindness of him to whom she had trusted her happiness.

"She left her only child to my care; a sacred bequest. She became to me as my own, and I grieved that her mother in her last hours had returned to her early faith, and her dying request was, that her daughter should embrace the destiny from which she had fled, and in so doing, she firmly believed, had sealed her own wretchedness. I had but one living child, a son, a few years older than Aileen Clifton. They were reared together, and the fondest affection existed between them; and I was happy while those two bright and lovely beings played around me. Too soon the hour of separation arrived. My son was sent to England to receive a collegiate education, and Aileen was placed in the convent of La Mère de Dieu, to pass her noviciate. The convent was situated about twenty miles from my residence, and I paid stated visits to the child of my adoption. At first she appeared contented, and her placid brow and smiling lip led me to rejoice that in her present sanctuary she would be spared the struggles and trials of life. Alas! alas! even there the spoiler found her.

"At the time Aileen was placed in the convent the struggle between England and the United Colonies was at its height, and soon the voice of war was heard in our borders. The brave Montgomery had besieged Quebec, and was anxiously expecting reinforcements to take the place by storm. A man, young, dauntless, of a subtle and soul-stirring eloquence, was sent from New York with despatches. The Canadian priests were generally favourable to a revolt among the people, and Alwin was passed from convent to

convent, in the disguise of a young brother of the order. The army of Arnold was known to be on the march to join Montgomery, and Alwin was compelled to stop some time in the convent in which Aileen was passing her noviciate; as rumours were rife in the country of a messenger being on his way to the gallant Irish chieftain, who bore to him the news of the approach of his friends.

"Young, romantic, and ardent, he heard my child sing in the choir—was charmed with her voice, and sought to behold her features. He succeeded—he loved her. They managed to evade the scrutiny of those around them, and Alwin wooed and won the bride of Heaven. Aileen fled with him, and sought the shelter of my roof. There they were wedded, and, after a few days passed in happiness, he left her to proceed on his journey, with the promise of a speedy return.

"He distinguished himself in the battle which was fought shortly afterwards, and, after an absence of two months, returned to his wife. Both were very young, and they seemed to revel in the affection which formed their whole of hope and happiness. You, who have known him as a stern, cold man, will marvel that a woman's love could ever have made the happiness of that grasping and soaring spirit; but so it was. He appeared not to look beyond the heaven of her smile, or the music of her voice, for anything to move or interest him. Alas! it was a woman's dream to think of chaining such a spirit in the perishing garlands love may weave. He was recalled to his duties, and he left Aileen with me, with a thousand protestations of eternal affection, and as speedy a return as would be consistent with the career he had embraced. She could not be his companion, for the country was in too unsettled a state to render it practicable to take her with him. He departed, and left me to console my sorrowing child. A long and weary time elapsed, and no letter came from Alwin. Aileen drooped, and visibly faded each day, while I watched over her with a sinking heart, for I feared that he had fallen in some of the numerous engagements which had taken place between the British and Americans.

"The expected return of my son, after an absence of several years, cheered me a little. The evening of his arrival was clear and bright. Alas! it was the last bright one I have ever known."

She stopped, and, shading her face with her hand, rocked her body to and fro. Her voice was low and husky, when she again spoke:—

"I had persuaded Aileen to walk around the garden, for she had of late confined herself almost entirely to the house, and I knew the fresh air would benefit her. I left her in a summer-house, which had been a favourite resort of Alwin's. It was twilight when my boy arrived, and, after greeting me, his first inquiry was for his sister, as he always called my foster child. I directed him where to find her, and followed in a few moments. As I entered the walk, loud shrieks burst on my ear, and I stood paralyzed by terror.

Alwin—your father, boy—rushed past me, with the countenance of a demon. I recovered myself, and flew to the spot. Oh God! oh God! what a sight there met my eyes! No wonder, is it—no wonder!" she exclaimed, starting up, and rushing to and fro with the fury of a tigress stripped of her young, "that I have cursed him—deeply, bitterly cursed him! There—there, supported by your mother, lay the bleeding body of my son, a victim to the blind passion of that fearful man.

"Edward had hurried to the summer-house, and, as he clasped Aileen to his heart, Alwin sprang over a hedge, and plunged his dagger in his side, as he exclaimed, 'Die, villain! and for you, perjured, debased woman, we meet no more!'

"That night my son breathed his last, and Aileen was lying in the next room, in a state between life and death. Alwin was heard of no more, and long was it before Aileen was capable of inquiring for him. When she did hear, it would have been far better for her to have died at once than live to know that, while she was bowed to the earth with the bitter sorrow he had inflicted on her, he was with the gay, the happy in heart, and had no thought for her anguish. She arose from her bed of sickness to find herself a forsaken mother. Oh, often have I beheld her bending over the couch on which you slumbered in innocence and peace, while the tears wrung from her breaking heart bathed your infant brow. She deemed it but justice to herself to write to Alwin, and vindicate herself. He deigned no reply."

"That letter must then have missed its destination," said Russell. "From what he said to me, I know it never reached him."

"It may not; I do not know, nor care. *I* have never vindicated my child to him. Let me proceed.

"Aileen was a Catholic. She had been strictly educated in that faith, and her mind was deeply imbued with its superstitions. The curse of an offended God, she believed, was pursuing her for having broken the vows which bound her to Him, and she seriously meditated seeking an asylum in the convent from which she had fled.

"You were two years of age, when a paper reached us containing the marriage of your father with another! The paper had been published a year before, but this was the first intimation we had received of an event which so deeply concerned us. I thought Aileen would sink beneath this last blow, but it appeared to restore her energies. In reply to my question, as to what she designed doing, she took you in her arms, and said—"'If I had no child who may live to hear his mother's story, I would bury my wretchedness in a convent, and leave Alwin to his own guilt; but that cannot now be. For the sake of my boy, I will establish my claims, and then leave him for ever.'

"Our preparations were soon completed, and we travelled in safety to New York. Alwin was absent from his home, on a visit to the relatives of his young wife, in Richmond in Virginia. We

embarked for Norfolk, and when outside of the capes, a terrific storm wrecked the vessel. I escaped with you; how, it matters not now. All the rest perished; and I begged my way to Richmond, and sought your father.

"My mind was not as clear as it should have been, for all this accumulated suffering had sadly jarred it; and I wandered long before I found his abode. He had been the means of destroying all that made life valuable to me, and to avenge myself on him was now my only thought. When the servant ushered me into a magnificently furnished apartment, I found a fair young creature, who asked me in the sweetest tones why I sought her husband? She held her own infant in her arms which she was fondly caressing. This then was the rival of my child! My heart hardened towards her; I placed you before her, and related the story of your mother.

"I have witnessed much suffering; I have endured much; yet never have I seen such wild despair as darkened over her features, as the truth of my relation burned into her soul, and she felt that the idol of her pride and affections was a base traitor! I left you with her, and departed to wander a deserted and maddened outcast over the earth! I was in part avenged. In one little month I saw him, who had made me desolate, leaning over the grave of her who had rivalled my beloved Aileen; and there was the anguish of an accusing spirit upon his features. I approached, and cursed him then! I have never ceased to pursue him with my imprecations, and I know they will fall. God is just, and blood sinks not into the earth without atonement!

"From childhood I have watched over you, and I have marked the coldly extended bounty—the heart that never opened to you,—and this added bitterness to my hatred. The child of her on whom he had so remorselessly trampled, had no claim on his affections, and my indignant heart felt that the love for the mother could never have been a real passion."

"There you are mistaken," said Russell; "my father was rash and hot-tempered in his youth, but never so base as you believe him. He——"

"We will not discuss his merits," interrupted Theresa; "I know him well. He once crushed me, and at length I possess the means of retaliating. I—yes, I must—as he has scorned me, hold his fate in my hands!"

"How? what do you mean?" inquired Russell.

"Look!" and she held up the packet intrusted to her by Zavala, "I hold in my hand his death-warrant!"

Russell recognised the writing on the envelope.

"These papers are from Don Pedro de Zavala?"

"They are."

"You must yield them to me, Theresa.'

"Boy! are you mad? You do not know what you ask,—it is no less than the sacrifice of my revenge on one I have pursued for years,

when I hold it in my very grasp! No! no! I cannot grant your request!"

"Theresa, remember he is my father, and the husband of her you once loved as your daughter."

"Yes, and the murderer of my son! the deserter of my broken-hearted Aileen! No, boy, you shall not prevail! I will place my foot upon his neck, and he shall feel that I am crushing him!"

"Theresa, hear me. You profess to love me, yet you would destroy my happiness for ever by delivering those papers; for if I judge rightly they contain the secret correspondence of Col. Alwin, and may bring to him the traitor's doom. Give them to me, my good Theresa, and with them I will convict a villain, and at the same time secure my own happiness."

"And if I do," said she doubtingly, "how am I to be certain that such results will follow? How can this sacrifice bring happiness to you?"

"By convincing my father that Zavala is not his friend, and at the same time freeing my betrothed from the engagement she has been forced to form with him."

"Ha!—is it even so? Do you indeed love the fair foreigner? Take them boy, and may the blessing of heaven go with your noble heart; for your happiness I would relinquish anything. Yet it is too late to save your father. Other papers have been sent before, and are, ere this, in the hands of the President. The whole conspiracy is known to him."

"Never mind; only give these to me, and I will make good use of them. I must now leave you, but when I can command time I will seek you again. I thank you for the revelation you have this evening made to me, and I will never forget nor forsake the friend of my mother. You are in poverty; let me share with you what I possess. For the present the contents of my purse will furnish you with a better lodging than this miserable hovel."

"No, Charles, I do not need your alms; I am not dependent on the bounty of others. I receive a yearly stipend from property in Montreal, and although I live like what I am, an outcast from human sympathy, I really need nothing. It is my pleasure to lead this wild, wandering life. Adieu!—we may meet again. Until then, may heaven guide and prosper you."

Reverently pressing to his lips the hand which she extended to him, Russell left the hovel, and after reaching the level ground above, he mounted his horse and galloped towards Natchez.

CHAPTER XLI.

"HERE are despatches from my uncle," said Zavala, as he entered the room in which Col. Alwin sat, in deep consultation with Fitz-Gerald.

"And most welcome they are," replied Col. Alwin, rapidly breaking the seals. He glanced quickly over the contents, and then stood in a musing attitude some moments.

"General Zavala informs me that at a moment's warning he is ready to cross the Sabine. Our movements must be simultaneous. To-night we have a ball—good; many will be present that I must consult with. On to-morrow we will raise our standard, and the adherents to our cause, who throng the city, will rise and join us. I have no fears for the result, for the most influential men in the country will either remain passive or give their countenance to the enterprise. Fitzgerald, my friend, do you now regret joining with me? I rejoice that you did so."

"And I have no cause to repent it," said Fitzgerald. "Success seems about to crown our efforts, and we shall be able to dictate terms to those who oppose us. Had it been otherwise, we might both —"

"True—true. I anticipate your meaning; utter it not in this moment of triumph. I would have no darker thoughts intrude on the bright prospect before me. I shall soon be at the head of such a force as will enable me to defy the Governor, and make him a prisoner in his own capital. You, my friend, I shall retain near my person, as my trustiest counsellor. Zavala shall be high in command, and when my authority is permanently established, you shall choose your own rewards for your faithfulness to me and my cause. In a week we march on Mexico; and once in the stately capital of Montezuma, victory is ours. Proudly will I hurl back defiance to him who shall dare to challenge my right to the high station I have attained."

He turned towards Zavala, and the expression of his countenance startled even Col. Alwin. There was a sneer on his lip, and a laughing devil in his eye, which seemed to mock at the visionary empire Alwin appeared ready to grasp. He bent towards him, and spoke in a low stern tone.

"What may that look indicate, Don Pedro? Is there treason to my cause among my personal friends, or have you repented the offer of your promised assistance? If the heart, no longer warmed by the smiles of a feeble girl, has become lukewarm, avow it at once."

"You wrong me, Col. Alwin. I know not why you should address me thus. I came to you with friendly purpose; and it is with sorrow I must decline the offer you have been kind enough to make. I have heard news this morning which compels me to leave you for a time. I must proceed instantly to New Orleans, for my mother has gone there to seek medical advice, and she is considered in a very dangerous condition. I set out within an hour."

"'Tis well, Sir," replied Alwin, haughtily drawing himself up. "God forbid that I should detain a son from the sick couch of his mother; neither do I seek to retain one who can abandon me at such

a crisis. Yet mark me, Sir, my ward shall never wed with one who seeks a pretext to leave me in the moment of danger; and for traitors I have *this*." He pointed significantly to the hilt of the poniard he always wore.

A scornful smile passed over Zavala's features.

"I fear not your dagger, Sir, as no one knows better than yourself. You are angry and excited, Col. Alwin, and cannot now do justice to me. At some future day, when your mind is in a calmer state, we will resume the subject of this marriage; and I think I shall then be able to offer inducements which will once more gain your consent to bestow the hand of Miss de Bourg upon me. Farewell, Sir; I will not part with you in anger."

"He seized the hand of Alwin, and pressing it to his lips, abruptly left the room. As his retreating footsteps died away, he said—

"This is strange, for Isabel had a letter from Madame Zavala this morning, and there was no allusion to sickness in it. I scarcely know what to think. We can do without his aid, however, and it is now too late to have our well-laid plans rustrated by any information he can give."

"True; we are secure from any he can *now* give, but not from what may have already been bestowed. I must confess I have always mistrusted Zavala. There are few of the traits of an upright, noble-minded man about him; and of late he has worn a moody brow. I believe him quite capable of treason to any cause."

"If I thought him false to me," said his fiery companion, starting up, "I would take his life within the hour. Yes, his worthless life would be a small sacrifice for such foul treachery. Yet no—he loves Julie, and cannot be fiend enough to endanger the life of the protector to whom she is tenderly attached."

The evening arrived—that evening so triumphantly anticipated by many, so fraught with woe, desolation, and disappointment to the giver of the fête.

The mansion blazed with light, and the sounds of music filled the air with its joyful strains. The young, the gay, and the beautiful, had assembled to do honour to the queen of the revels. It was a bouquet party, given by Miss Alwin in return for one given in honour of herself during the previous week.

The entertainment so named originated among the early French settlers of the country, who brought with them from their own land their national love of dancing. A magnificent bouquet of rare flowers was arranged with artistic skill, and the giver of th entertainment was king over his guests for the evening. He was bound to select as the partner of his honours some one of the fair and blooming girls around him, and on her he bestowed the bouquet as her insignia of royalty. The queen thus selected was bound to return the fête, choosing in her turn a king, and thus parties enlivened the whole season.

As queen of the evening, Isabel stood at the head of the room,

attired in white satin, embroidered with silver; a coronet of pearls encircling her dark hair. Never had she appeared more lovely; and few who looked on that beaming brow, and heard the light words which sprang to her lips, would have dreamed that fear lay heavy at her heart. She had heard of the abrupt departure of Zavala, and as her eye followed the form of her father, winding his way amid the gay crowd, she trembled at the dangers which might even then be around him. Yet she had enough of his spirit in her bosom to mask her apprehensions under a smiling face and light jest.

Julie was beside her; her simple white robe and the cluster of rose buds in her hair offering a graceful contrast to the magnificent toilette of the queen of the evening. Her cheek had once more resumed its roundness, and the faint rose hue that tinged it, gave promise of returning health. There was a light in her clear eye, which had not been visible there for many weary months; for to her, the departure of Zavala seemed a tacit relinquishment of the engagement which her guardian would not permit her to consider as broken.

There was one shadow on the heart of Julie—one dream that would not be exorcised; and although the name of Russell was never mentioned in her presence, his image was the companion of all her solitary hours. The countenance of her lover, eloquent with genius, passion, and suffering, as she had last beheld it, was ever before her; the wild words of that farewell scene ever ringing in her ears; and she shuddered as the image of Zavala rose between them as an impassable barrier. The magic of his conversation, so rich with fancy, so eloquent with the poetry of the soul—the deepening of his voice into tenderness as he spoke to her alone, had too deep a charm ever to be forgotten.

It was in such scenes as the present, that her heart was most deeply saddened by such memories, for in such Russell had hitherto been her companion. She promenaded the rooms with Lieutenant Belton, a son of Col. Alwin's old friend, who had returned home on leave of absence from his military duties. Although he uttered all the lively nonsense he could think of to interest her, her countenance was abstracted, as if rather communing with her own thoughts, than regarding the gay throng before her, or listening to the satirical or witty remarks of her companion.

There was one in the crowd, a stranger, who did not attempt to enter the house, but stood on the gallery without, and watched the revellers with keen interest. At length his eye caught sight of a graceful figure in white, and he dwelt with deep interest on that face, as if endeavouring to trace the alterations made by illness and suffering, and his heart loved her more deeply, more fondly, for those mute evidences that he had not been forgotten.

"Sorrow has paled thy brow, my beloved," he murmured, "and soon the storm will sweep over those you love, levelling the stately oak with the dust, but the humble violet will escape scatheless, and

from the darkness of the present shall spring forth the light that shall guide us to happiness."

As Julie approached the window near which he stood, a bouquet fell at her feet. She started, and looked towards the spot from which it had been thrown. A figure stood in the obscurity without, with his hands raised, as if in warning.

Her cavalier stooped, and picked up the flowers.

"What have we here, Miss de Bourg? A message of love, sent in a bouquet! See—there is a note. This is quite a romantic little mystery."

"Oh, no, I do not deal in mysteries;" but her varying cheek seemed to contradict the words. "'Tis nothing—a mere frolic on the part of some one who wishes to teaze me."

"'Tis a frolic which seems to affect you very much. You are trembling with agitation. Pray, read the scroll, the mere appearance of which possesses such power to agitate you."

He led her to a seat apart from the crowd, and stood in such a position as to screen her from observation, while she opened the paper, and read the following words:—

"Julie, meet me in the garden as soon as you can escape unobserved. I will await you there until one o'clock. I would not have asked this interview, much as I desire to see you, if I possessed any other means of communicating with Col. Alwin. Surrounded as he is, and embittered against me as he is, I find it impossible to gain access to him, even for a moment. For *his* sake I request the interview, and not to advocate any wishes of my own.

"C. R."

Julie read these words in breathless perturbation. She knew enough of Col. Alwin's plans, to be aware that he stood in a very perilous position, and the discovery of them by those in authority would involve him in utter ruin. She shuddered as she looked on the varying cheek of Isabel, and remembered her devotion to her father."

"If anything should happen to him, it will kill her!" she exclaimed, starting up, quite forgetful of the scene before her.

"Kill who, Miss de Bourg?" said Lieutenant Belton, looking on her with astonishment. "I hope you are not meditating the committal of murder, with any weapon more dangerous than the shaft of Cupid?"

"No, nor, just now, with that," she replied, recalling her scattered senses, and making an effort to smile. "I forgot where I was; pray let us walk on."

"Nay, lady fair, let us join the dancers. See, our bright queen stands at the head of the room, ready to open the ball, and as a reward for being so incurious respecting the missive you have just received, I claim you as my partner in the mazes of this dance."

Julie would have excused herself, but Belton petitioned so earnestly for one set, that she was compelled to join in an amusement, which at such a moment was more than distasteful to her. Hour after hour rolled away, and still the enamoured Lieutenant lingered by her side. Almost sick with vexation, she at length made her escape, and hastened into the garden.

Never had Isabel been so gay and brilliant as on that evening, and the winning elegance of her manner—the attractive sweetness of her countenance, charmed all who approached her. Exhausted by her efforts to please, and the strong control she had exerted over her feelings, she took refuge from the crowd at a late hour, on one of the galleries. As she leaned over the railing, and viewed the tranquil heaven, with its bright stars; as she felt the cool air of night fanning her feverish brow, a sensation of quiet pleasure filled her soul. The excitement of the evening was over, and wearied she leaned against the massive pillar, and reflected on all that might occur within the next few hours. The sounds of music came from the distant rooms in which they were still dancing, but she soon ceased to listen to them. Her thoughts were with her father, when, as if in reply to them, she heard his name uttered in a distinct, though suppressed tone in the garden below her. She leaned forward, for she recognised the voice of Russell, and the words he uttered stilled the pulsations of her heart for one instant, though in the next it beat with a fluttering motion, which threatened to suffocate her. She stood perfectly still and heard all that was uttered, although two sentences alone seemed to make any impression on her senses. These were: "He has been betrayed by that villain." "To-morrow, the officers will be here to arrest him. She sank on a chair, which fortunately stood near, and how long she remained there, she knew not. The two, who in the interest of their conversation had approached too near the house, stood many moments on the same spot, unwilling to part, when they knew not when they might again meet. The murmur of their voices came up to her on the star-lit air, but she sat as one stunned, bewildered, by the sudden bursting of the storm, so long dreaded, and hitherto so adroitly evaded.

When Julie again entered the saloon, the company had departed, but she could nowhere find Isabel. The bearer of a packet to Col. Alwin, which she dared not delay giving to him, yet the contents of which she feared to think of, she hurried through the rooms, and knocked at his door.

"Who is there?" he inquired.

"It is I, Julie," she timidly replied. "Pray open the door quickly; I have a package of papers which it concerns you to see immediately."

Col. Alwin instantly unclosed the door.

"What is the matter, Julie? You are actually trembling with agitation, and you are as white as a ghost. Where have you been, and what are these?"

"Examine, and see for yourself. They will tell their own tale. I must seek Isabel."

"You will find her on the gallery, I expect," said he, calmly breaking the seals of the ominous envelopes, unconscious that the first words which would meet his sight, must for ever destroy the hopes he had thought almost realized. Julie closed the door, and hastened in search of her friend, uncertain how to break to her the dreadful tidings of which she was the bearer. She found Isabel lying on the gallery floor, where she had slipped from her chair, in a state of insensibility. As she stooped to raise her, she perceived with horror that her dress was spotted with blood. In the agony of learning that the doom she feared had indeed fallen on her idolized father, Isabel had ruptured a blood-vessel.

CHAPTER XLII.

Col. Alwin stood in his apartment, with a face from which every shade of colour had fled; his lips were compressed—his eyes bloodshot, and a cold dew bursting from his forehead. Fortunately he was alone, for in that hour of intense agony, of deep humiliation, he could not have borne the glance of a human eye. Alone with his God and his bitter suffering, he stood. On the floor, were fragments of torn paper, and he placed the heel of his boot on them, and ground them with impotent rage.

"And this is what I have lived for, struggled for," said he, through his closed teeth. "To be a mock to my scorning countrymen, for the vulgar to point at and say—'There is the man who sought to spring beyond the sphere allotted him, and fell short of his mark.' God—God, can I endure this and live? Baffled—baffled, in everything, my schemes made known, my most secret plans in the hands of Government, myself a proscribed man, with a price set upon my head!"

He stepped to the table, and took from it a pair of pistols, which he carefully loaded, and then replaced. He then proceeded to burn several large packages of letters; the correspondence of those who were leagued with him; and the iron nerve of the man was conspicuous in that moment of overwhelming bitterness. There was no trembling of the rigid muscles of that pale face; no unsteady motion of the fingers, as they dropped the papers in the flames, and watched them as they were consumed. As the last one sank into ashes, he muttered—

"All, all have perished—their writers have trusted me, and they shall never be betrayed. They were my friends; though, I doubt not, the enterprise which failed of success will be stigmatized, even by them, as the mad scheme of an ambitious man. It matters not now: *the secret dies with me:* the vast plans—the vaulting ambition, which might have found a field for their operation but for this dark

villany, are now buried in the grave of base treachery. No man shall ever know how high they soared—into what a chaos of darkness their disappointment has plunged me. And there is Fitzgerald, ruined by his adherence to my cause. I must reveal to him the peril in which we stand. He will reproach me, justly, perhaps; but that I can bear. What could I not bear *now?*"

As he unclosed the door, a servant was passing, and he sent him with a message, desiring to see Mr. Fitzgerald immediately. It was then about two o'clock, and he calculated that Fitzgerald would have sufficient time to escape before the dawn of day. In a few moments he entered with the paleness of despair upon his countenance, and Alwin read in it that he already knew the catastrophe he intended to announce. He approached and confronted Alwin.

"I have seen Russell, and I am aware that we are betrayed; but, until to-night, I did not know that you had drawn me into an enterprise, the ultimate end of which must have been to plunge the country into a civil war. Had I listened to the warning of Russell, given long ago, I should have been saved from ruin; but infatuated by your eloquence, I feel that I have been a mere puppet in your hands; influenced at your own will, and made to play any part you wished. I now see all my weakness and folly; yet I forgive you, for I was a fool to be lured by any temptation from the happy home in which you found me. May your conscience never reproach you for the deception you have practised on an honest man, and the desolation you have brought to his hearth. I must now leave you, to communicate to one dearer to me than life, the sad fate which threatens me. I shall make no attempt to escape, but shall deliver myself to the officers when they arrive, and abide whatever punishment the laws of your country may inflict on me."

"Stop, Sir," said Col. Alwin, with an air of superb haughtiness —"we part not thus. A few words in my own defence seem due to myself. I have deceived you, but it was for your own good. I found you wearied of the solitude in which you had buried yourself; ready to become the recipient of any factious scheme which promised the enjoyment of a brilliant position as its reward. Call your home a paradise if you will, but, before I entered it, the serpent was at work in your own bosom, which disposed you to listen to the voice which promised to place within your grasp the greatness you coveted. Had we been successful, and your reward as brilliant as I once hoped it would be, Mr. Fitzgerald would scarcely have taunted me with the deceptions which assisted his elevation. No, Sir, I found that your conscience needed some excuse, and I gave you one in permitting you to believe that I had no intention of injuring my native land. If you had not sufficient penetration to see that my interests must clash with hers, must I be made answerable for your wilful blindness? Go—go to your wife, and console her; such spirits as yours were not formed to battle with fortune."

"Have you finished?" inquired Fitzgerald, calmly, although he

was very pale. "I did not come hither to bandy reproaches with you; but to bid you farewell, until we meet before the tribunal of your country, or, perchance, before a yet higher one. Farewell, Col. Alwin; let not those part in anger whose next meeting must be under such circumstances as ours must be."

He held out his hand, and Alwin grasped it firmly.—"Yes—we will part as friends, for God knows we can neither of us afford to repel friendship at such a crisis, however useless it may be. Farewell for ever—it is our final parting, for on earth there will be no meeting for us after this. I will never stand before my hooting countrymen; condemned perchance to the traitor's doom. I will never leave this room as a prisoner, while my fate is in my own power."

"You will fly then—"

"Fly!" repeated he disdainfully—"whither? and if I could escape, to what purpose would it be? All that rendered life valuable is wrested from me at one fell blow. Is it not better to die at once, than to exist with the memory of this hour clinging to me, and crushing me into a nothingness worse than death?"

"Rash man, would you commit suicide? Think of your daughter—of your ward. What becomes of them, if you take a life which, with all your boasted courage, you shrink from enduring when deprived of the stimulus of ambition. I came hither partly to inform you that your daughter now lies almost within the embrace of death. She accidentally overheard a portion of the conversation between Russell and Miss de Bourg, and in the overwhelming agitation of the moment, she ruptured a blood-vessel."

"Great God! the fate of her mother!" exclaimed Col. Alwin, his apprehensions for his darling Isabel overcoming every selfish feeling. He hastily rushed from the room, to ascertain if his evil doom was to be consummated in the early death of his beloved child.

He found her supported on the bosom of Julie, as white, and nearly as lifeless, as the marble image she resembled. Julie had prevented the alarmed attendants from summoning her father, as she knew, at such a moment, he needed not the additional agony of knowing the extreme danger of his daughter. Dr. Crawford had been immediately summoned, and every remedy applied which skill could offer; and when her father entered, she could speak in a faint whisper.

"My child—my Isabel, do I find thee thus?" he murmured, as he raised her gently from the supporting arm of Julie, and reclined her head on his own breast, while the tears for which he would have scorned himself, had they been shed over his own disappointment, fell like rain on the pale brow over which he leaned. "Oh, my beloved one, look on me and tell me that I have not destroyed you."

She half raised her heavy eyelids and murmured—

"I am better—I shall soon be well; but you must go. If you

would not see me die before you, leave this spot which is so fraught with danger to you."

The unhappy father gazed on the deathlike features—he touched her hand; it sent an icy thrill through his frame, and he believed her about to breathe her last. In a voice whose agonized tones went to the heart of her he addressed, he said—

"Oh, leave me not to mourn you too, my best beloved. Bear up yet a little while, my glorious child; for my sake, live; without you I am desolate; the last interest I have in life is my affection for you. Borne down, crushed, trampled on, torn from my proud station, as an eagle with a broken wing dragged from his upward flight; oh, Isabel, my child, leave me not alone in this dark and frowning world."

"My father," said the faint voice of the young sufferer," if anything could recal my fleeting spirit back to earth, it would be those tones of deep anguish. Oh, call not on me thus! I can bear to die, but not to leave you in despair. I can calmly behold the shadows of the grave closing around me. I can fall without a murmur into the dreamless slumber of the dead, if you are not inconsolable for my loss. Yet I would that I could be permitted in that future world to dream of one I have so entirely loved; to anticipate the hour of our re-union; to be permitted to return to you in spirit, and though unseen, to whisper words of consolation and hope. When the evening breeze sweeps over your brow, think that it breathes of the unceasing love of your child. No other affection have I known; love has passed me scatheless by; there was no room in my heart for any other idol."

"Oh, God! must I indeed lose you, my beautiful, my noble child! Spare me this, O most merciful One, and all else I can bear. Ambition has failed me, when its rewards were almost within my grasp; and now the sole link that bound me to life is about to be broken for ever. My child, my child, would that I could die for you!"

"Ah, say not so, dearest father, I am of little worth; throw from your heart the memory of your disappointment, your affliction; rise in your native greatness, and return good for the evil your enemies would heap on you. You may yet soar superior to them all. I am utterly exhausted, dearest father, and my heart flutters painfully when I think how much you risk in remaining near me. Pray—pray leave me."

He impressed an agonized kiss on the brow and lips of the suffering girl, and resigning her to Julie, tore himself away. Dr. Crawford accompanied him from the room.

"Oh, Doctor," said the unhappy father, wringing his friend's hand, "I beg that you will not deceive me. I can bear the truth as well, and better now than at any other time. Do you think I can shrink from any calamity, after what I have this night endured?"

"There is yet hope," replied the physician. "If Isabel is not violently agitated again, she may entirely recover. I confidently hope

she will; but until you are placed in comparative safety, by leaving this place, I need scarcely say that every noise will painfully affect her, and the excitement may be fatal."

"I will go then immediately. Nothing less than her imminent danger could force me to fly from this threatened arrest. To save her life, I would yield to any humiliation; yet, oh, Crawford, how shall I bear to be away when she may be dying!"

The physician looked at him with compassion, for he saw from the convulsive movements of his features, that many agonizing emotions were contending for the mastery in that bosom, which had appeared nearly inaccessible to the softer feelings of humanity.

"My dear friend, you must bear it as you best can. I will send letters to meet you at New Orleans, which I hope will contain cheering news. Isabel is young, and I think may recover this blow. Russell has made every arrangement for your flight, and your horse is saddled even now, awaiting his master."

"Russell! where did he come from, and by what chance did he know of the danger which menaced me?"

"It would seem that he has never lost sight of you, and since his release from the power of W—— he has been seeking a sort of crazy woman, known by the name of Theresa, who, he was led to believe, could give him some information he was desirous of possessing. He found her, in time to intercept a package of papers which Zavala had intrusted to her care; but not in time to prevent all your plans from being betrayed by others, which had been despatched some weeks before to the seat of government. So soon as he learned this fact, he put spurs to his horse, and rode into the city. He stopped there, intending to write and inclose the papers to you: fortunately, while at the hotel, he encountered the officers who had been authorized to arrest you, and overheard their agreement to wait until morning to execute their commission. He instantly came out here, in time to warn you to save yourself. The house was crowded with company, and he found it impossible to speak with you. He contrived to deliver a note to Miss de Bourg, revealed to her your danger, and then employed himself in getting everything ready for your flight. Come, it is time you were setting out, for the first glimmering of daylight is already visible."

Col. Alwin wrung his hand.

"Friend of my life, true friend as I have ever found you, I have but one injunction to give you—save my child."

"If human skill and attention can accomplish it, she shall be saved. I have no fears for myself, for I have no concern in your enterprise that can compromise me in any way; so I can give my undivided attention to my patient."

Russell himself held the bridle of the horse. Col. Alwin approached and grasped his hand, while he uttered a few words of thanks, which more than repaid him for his efforts to serve him.

CHAPTER XLIII.

During the commotion in the house, Mrs. Fitzgerald, whose apartment was on the opposite side of the mansion, had remained in ignorance of all that had happened.

She anticipated with pleasure the brilliant station she soon hoped to fill, and was well disposed to further the elevation of her husband by every means in her power. She felt that a great change had been wrought in her; she knew that she was no longer the fond mother, the devoted wife, who had once bounded her happiness within the precincts of her home. A restless and craving desire for constant excitement had become the habitual inmate of her bosom; and with ill-repressed delight she thought of the near approach of that hour in which she would be elevated to the station of a sort of vice-queen in the new kingdom in which her husband held so distinguished a position. With such feelings, she was ill prepared for the reverse which was about to fall on her.

When her husband entered, he found her still in the magnificent costume she had worn at the entertainment of the evening, and even amid his own inquietude, he remarked how becoming it was to her majestic beauty.

"These diamonds well become your queenly brow, my Margaret," he said, as he leaned over her, and imprinted a kiss on her fair forehead. "I trust the revels of the evening brought pleasure to your heart."

"Ah, yes! I feel myself in my true element here. Though we were happy in our island home, I think this life of gay excitement is more suited to my natural inclinations. This is to live indeed, Eustace—respect and homage follows us, and we look forward to higher aims, and a nobler ambition in the future, than mere amusement offers."

Fitzgerald sighed heavily. She turned and looked in his face with an expression of surprise. She apprehensively asked—

"Has anything gone wrong? Why is your brow so clouded, dear Eustace? Ah! It will be a severe blow, if——"

She paused, pale and trembling, for she knew his face too well not to read in it the destruction of her chateau en Espagne. Fitzgerald turned away in bitterness of heart, for he remembered that evening on which she had with such high-souled energy remonstrated against his espousing the interests of Col. Alwin, and he grieved that she had altered so greatly in so short a time. He knew the tidings he brought would be a severe disappointment to her, for he had seen the ambitious aspirations of a high-toned nature spring into existence under the hope of successfully attaining all it desired. The passion for sway had only been dormant, and Mrs. Fitzgerald was as ready to play the great lady as any dame of high degree in the broad bounds of aristocratic Europe. She possessed, however, a gentle and

feminine spirit, and a sensibility of soul, which endeared her to all who knew her. The desire for distinction had not yet overshadowed the more lovely attributes of her character, and to these the husband trusted to sustain her under the present downfal of all her high-raised hopes. Yet he shrank from telling her the utter ruin which had overwhelmed him—the uncertain fate that menaced him.

The result proved that he did not yet know the high-hearted woman who, whatever her faults might be, was yet capable of sacrificing all with cheerfulness to follow him to the prison—or even to the scaffold.

She saw that he was deeply disturbed, and making an effort to overcome her own perturbation, she arose from her seat and approached him. She clasped his cold hand caressingly in hers, and said in a voice of tender interest—

"Do not fear to speak, love!—I have a brave, strong heart, and with you or for you it can endure much."

"Ah! Margaret, I fear to tell you all. A few months since, in such an emergency, I should have fled to you for counsel and comfort, but now——"

"Eustace, you think I have altered much, if you really shrink from any revelation in which you are vitally interested. You fancy that this life of splendour and gaiety has charms for me, which I shall mourn to surrender; perhaps you are right, for I am but a woman, with many of the weaknesses of my sex; but I am also strong in her greatest strength—in woman's undying affection for those she loves, and the power to endure misfortunes calmly if shared with them. My heart is as truly yours as on the day we stood beside the altar; speak, then, I will shrink from nothing that concerns you."

"Even if it bring with it ruin and disgrace?"

"No; your lot is mine. If these follies had taken a hold on my fancy, they can be laid aside, even as the ornaments I wear. I have had my dream, and I do not deny that it has been a bright one; but if it is disappointed, I can bear it, as we all learn to bear the inevitable evils of life. Your Margaret's lips shall not be without a smile to cheer you, even in the darkest hours."

"Noble, generous woman!" exclaimed her husband, clasping her in his arms. "Hitherto I have not known you! Oh, my beloved Margaret, forgive me for doubting for one moment that you would come from the trial, as pure as gold from the heat of the crucible."

"And now tell me all," said Mrs. Fitzgerald, gently extricating herself from his embrace, and leading him to a sofa, on which she placed herself beside him.

He did so; and as the narrative proceeded, the tears gathered on her long dark lashes, and slowly dropped on the hand of her husband, which was clasped in both her own. Until that moment she had not known how deeply her mind had yielded itself to the fascinating delusions Col. Alwin spread before her. Knowing her influence over the vacillating mind of her husband, he had sought by every means in his power to array her on his side, for he rightly judged, that if

she continued to oppose his views, Fitzgerald would soon abandon the cause he had espoused.

At first, she had listened coldly, and merely refrained from endeavouring to influence her husband in any way, because she considered him pledged to sustain the conspiracy, and thought it dishonourable to withdraw; but she gradually listened with more interest to the voice that flattered so adroitly, and soon she looked forward with eager expectation to the consummation of the enterprise. Bitter disappointment was the predominant feeling, until she learned the peril in which her husband was placed. Then the feelings of the woman, the wife, triumphed; and throwing herself upon his breast with a violence of emotion, she exclaimed—

"Though deserted, forsaken by all the world, still will I be to you all you could wish. Forgive me, oh, my husband, if I have permitted other thoughts to engross the heart that should have been devoted to you alone. We have both been dupes to this speciously eloquent man, and we must bear the punishment for our weakness. The worst that can befal you, is to be tried, for you must be cleared of all treasonable intentions towards the United States."

"Tried among strangers, remember, Margaret. Yes, I feel that I have been a dupe, and this consciousness adds a bitter sting to my sufferings. I must be dragged forward and tried for an offence of which I am guiltless; and to save myself from punishment, I shall be compelled to prove what a weak, vain fool I have been, how completely I have been the instrument of an artful man."

"Where is Col. Alwin?"

"He has already fled, but I shall remain; conscious of my own innocence, I shall not attempt to evade the laws of the country."

"You are right, dear Eustace. Flight could not avail you. I shall instantly prepare to accompany you, whithersoever your fate may lead you."

"I fear that will be impossible, as Miss Alwin lies at the point of death."

In reply to her eager inquiries, he related the events of the night, and the cause of Isabel's extreme danger.

"You cannot abandon her in her present state," he continued. If she recovers, you can accompany her and Miss de Bourg to the place in which the trial may take place. Dr. Crawford will protect you."

"How is it that he escapes suspicion?"

"Simply because he has little interest in our plans. He is known to be a warm personal friend of Col. Alwin, and Zavala has implicated him in none of the discoveries he has made."

By this time, day was dawning, and after changing her dress, Mrs. Fitzgerald went to the apartment of Isabel, to ascertain how she then was. She was lying with her eyes closed, so pale and still, that she started back with the fearful impression that the spirit had already passed from the statue-like form before her.

Dr. Crawford was beside her, and Julie, in a white morning wrapper, bathed her brow with an aromatic essence. The Doctor motioned to Mrs. Fitzgerald to be silent, and softly moving away, led her into the next room.

"Do not be so alarmed, dear madam," said he, "I think she will recover. All your own courage is necessary to meet the emergency of the morning. Are you aware that at day-light the officers will be——"

"I know all," she impetuously interrupted, "and am prepared for it. My husband remains."

"'Tis as well for him to do so," replied Dr. Crawford, thoughtfully. "But what do you purpose doing?"

"I remain by his desire, until Miss Alwin is sufficiently recovered to travel, or——"

"Do not name the alternative," said he hastily. "I thought myself hardened to scenes of suffering; but I own that my heart shrinks when I look on this being, so lately glowing in life and hope, reduced to such a condition: yet I confidently hope that I shall be able to save her."

"I trust so indeed," replied Mrs. Fitzgerald; and after another look at the deathlike face of the lately bright and blooming Isabel, she turned away with a sigh, and left the room.

Morning came, and with it the officers who were to arrest Fitzgerald. On learning the escape of Col. Alwin, a party immediately set out in pursuit.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Night had long since closed in, and still the lonely wanderer continued on his cheerless way. He was weary and hungry, and vainly looked around for a place of shelter, where he might find refreshment and rest. His jaded horse stumbled at nearly every step, and at length dismounting, he led him through the dark and tangled wood. He at length issued from it and looked around him.

The moon was high in the heavens, and her light glittered in silvery sparkles on the bosom of a small clear stream which lay before him. Above, was a cloudless sky; and around, as far as the eye could reach, the deep forest cast its sombre shadows.

He was more than once tempted to throw himself into the dark tide which lay at his feet, and suffer its cool waters to quench the fiery thoughts that burned in his brain, together with the spirit that gave them birth.

He thus pursued his weary way along the banks of the river, his dark and bitter thoughts only varied by an occasional pang as he recalled the pallid face of his daughter, as he had last seen it, with the shadow of death resting upon it. Suddenly a light streamed across

his pathway, and looking up, he saw that he was on the outskirts of an extensive plantation. The light proceeded from one of a long line of negro cabins, and within a few hundred yards was a substantial brick mansion surrounded by lofty trees.

Fastening the bridle of his horse to the fence, it was the work of a moment to enter the inclosure, and reconnoitre the house before applying for admittance. The windows were without shutters, and he approached one over which the curtain had not been drawn, and surveyed the room within. It was a spacious apartment, with a floor of highly polished boards, without a carpet on any portion of it. A small fire was on the hearth, and an old-fashioned mahogany stand was placed before it on which two candles were burning. The furniture of the room was extremely plain; consisting of such articles as were indispensable for daily use, made of the plainest materials.

On that side of the room, opposite the window, was seated an old lady, who looked as if she might just have walked from an antique picture frame. Her gray hair was powdered, and dressed in high folds on the top of her head, in the style of Marie Antoinette; and on the apex was placed a small cap. She wore a hoop and stays; and the tight sleeves of her dress reached only to the elbow, where they terminated in frills of broad lace. Her features were delicate, and had once been pretty; but the quick glancing black eye was the only one that retained any of its original beauty. A gentleman as antique as herself occupied an arm-chair within a few feet of her. He wore small clothes, with immense knee-buckles, and rosettes in his shoes; and the few hairs that time had left on his head were tied in a queue. They were evidently French emigrants, who had adhered to the fashions of their youth and country, even in the wilderness in which they lived.

Nearer to the window was a figure which excited more interest than the other inmates of the room. This was a lady reclining on a low couch, with the light from the candles shining full on her face. Alwin approached close to the window to obtain a nearer view of features, the sight of which sent the blood rushing in a torrent through his veins. Her figure was tall, and although wasted by illness, was still remarkable for its delicate symmetry. She was clad in deep mourning, and a black veil lay over the back of the couch on which she reclined. She was thin almost to emaciation; and her features were quite colourless, while her jet black hair, which lay in heavy folds above her brow, rendered them yet more pallid from the contrast. There was an expression of subdued feeling about the small and beautifully defined mouth, which must instantly have interested one accustomed to study the lineaments of the "human face divine." It was evident that deep and agonizing suffering had stamped its impress on the face before him; and as he gazed on the delicate and chiselled features, which time and sorrow appeared to have hallowed by their touch, without destroying

any of their loveliness, a cold shiver ran through his frame, and he mentally exclaimed—

"Can the grave yield up its tenant to mock me! It cannot—cannot be! She has long since found a watery grave!"

He gazed long and earnestly on the sad countenance, forgetful of the danger of discovery from those within. Suddenly a cry from the old lady, and a gesture towards the window, warned him that he had been seen. At the alarm a young man came in from the next room, and inquired its cause.

Col. Alwin found it was too late to retreat, even if he had desired to do so, so he proceeded to the door and demanded admittance. It was soon opened by the young man he had before seen, who inquired his business in a courteous tone. Alwin briefly informed him that he was benighted, and wished to obtain refreshment and a night's lodging. These were readily granted, and the stranger was ushered into the house.

On entering the apartment he had so recently scrutinized, he received a polite welcome from the old people; but the lady he so much desired to see had thrown a thick veil over her face, and its dark folds completely concealed her features. He observed that she appeared agitated, for the small fair hand which lay on her black dress slightly trembled.

He seated himself, and there was a pause of several moments while the old couple were resuming their former attitudes and recovering from the slight perturbation the incident had occasioned. During this time Col. Alwin was gazing on a ring which encircled one of the fingers of the veiled lady's hand. It was a simple braid of hair in a gold setting, with a small square of jet on the top, in which glittered a diamond. He would have given much to approach near enough to examine the jewel more closely, for such a ring he had once placed on a hand marvellously like the one before him; and had not the belief been impressed on his mind that many years before the "salt seas had closed o'er her lovely head," he would not for an instant have doubted that the idol of his young affections was before him. The old gentleman interrupted his reverie by inquiring—

"From what part of the country are you journeying, monsieur?"

"I came from New Orleans last."

"Who spoke!" exclaimed the lady, starting up, and gazing wildly around. "That voice is for my dreams alone; who spoke in it even now?"

As she raised her head, her veil dropped on the floor, and when her full melancholy black eye fell on him, Alwin was convinced that his conjecture was right. No unreal image was before him, but the living, breathing form of Aileen Clifton, he had once so madly loved! The old lady approached her, and spoke in a low soothing tone.

"Aileen, my darling, why are you thus excited? It was only the strange gentleman who spoke."

"Ah, it was *his* voice, mother. Should I not know the tones that whispered endless love, and were listened to with fond credulity? Oh, yes, its lightest one would thrill to the heart that has never ceased to love him, though he did trample on it."

Irrepressible interest caused Col. Alwin to draw near the couch, and as she finished speaking, he said in a low tone—

"Never ceased to love him, Aileen?"

"Never! as I hope for heaven," was the fervent response, as she sank back, exhausted by the violence of her emotions.

In a few moments she appeared more composed, and addressing the old lady, requested that she might be left alone a short time with the stranger, as he was one she had formerly known. Her request was immediately complied with, and as the door closed after the old couple, she slowly raised herself, and looked earnestly into the pale face which was turned towards her.

He had removed his hat, and she appeared to be slowly recalling the recollection of some image that lived in her memory, and comparing it with the features before her. At length, veiling her eyes with her hands, she said slowly, and with effort—

"Great God! is it possible that we again stand face to face? Who are you? Tell me; are you a living being, or only a phantom, come to mock me with your presence?"

"Aileen, do you indeed not know me? Has time obliterated every recollection of him you once professed to love fondly? Of him you so cruelly deceived?"

"Deceived!" she passionately repeated. "Never—never! I was the victim of treachery, black as ever entered the heart of a fiend. Go—go; leave me. Your presence is a horror to me. I have endeavoured to loathe your very name, but I could not. I have tried to curse you, but my lips would not pronounce the words that could not spring from the heart you had desolated."

"Aileen, listen to me; we must both be labouring under a great error. I have believed myself the injured person, and your words would imply that you consider yourself the suffering party. You have but one act to complain of, and that was the deed of a man maddened by passion. What other injury have I inflicted on you?"

"Was it no injury to win a fond heart?—to persuade a foolish girl to link her fate with yours, and then leave her to wretchedness? Was it no injury to leave that same credulous girl insensible at your feet, with her garments drenched with the life-blood of the son of her benefactors—of one with whom she had been reared as a sister?"

"Your adopted brother!" exclaimed Alwin, springing to his feet. "I was taught to believe him a lover—one you had preferred to me; that you were to meet that evening to mourn over the infatuation which had led you to become the bride of another; and then to part for ever. I was to be again received, as though no other love had ever filled your heart. I, who had so nearly staked my all of happiness on my affection for you. Oh, heaven! have I indeed been,

through my life, the dupe of my own headlong passions! Aileen, can you forgive me?"

"I have long since learned to subdue all bitter feeling, and to forgive even as I hope to be myself forgiven."

"Ever gentle, ever compassionate; time has not seared your feelings, my much injured and long-suffering friend. Tell me how you came hither. Many years since, I was induced to believe that you had perished at sea."

No; I was spared to spend a suffering existence in recalling all I once possessed and had torn from me. I learned that you had formed other ties, which must for ever exclude myself and child from having justice done to us. I set out with my infant, and, accompanied by my protectress, determined to claim the station so justly my own, then leave you for ever. The vessel was wrecked, my child and my friend perished. I had been securely fastened to a piece of floating timber, and a few hours after the vessel went to pieces, I was picked up in a senseless state by the crew of a ship bound for Louisiana.

"A large party of French emigrants were on board, and the excellent people with whom I have since resided were among them. On the voyage from their own country, they had lost an only daughter, and from some fancied resemblance between us, they took me under their protection. I willingly consented to accompany them, for my native land was now odious to me, and yours was not the less linked with memories that threatened to destroy me. My son was dead; the being in whom I had placed a devoted woman's trust, had forsaken me, and wedded another. The only creature who had ever truly loved me, was my beloved benefactress, and she had perished in following my unhappy fortunes. Thus I was desolate. I have lived here since, with my kind protectors, who have always treated me with the affection of parents."

There was a pause of deep emotion, only broken by the stifled sobs of the lady. At length Col. Alwin spoke, in a deep, hoarse tone.

"Aileen, I have deeply sinned against you, and scarcely dare to hope for pardon even from your gentle heart. I believed the tie which bound us together had become irksome to you; that you would gladly avail yourself of the liberty to marry the one you had once preferred. I knew that our marriage was informal, and could easily be set aside. Wealth and political connexions were the temptations, and I fell; I married another; she was young, lovely, and, more than all, she was devoted to me; but I never loved her. You, alone, have had the power to touch the deep-toned chords of my soul. She died—it matters not how—her life was a short and brilliant dream, which had but one grief; that one struck a fatal blow upon her tender heart; and only now do I comprehend what the story was, which mysteriously reached my gentle Isabel, and hurried her to her grave. I thank Heaven, that amid the bitterness

of this moment, there is a balm for me to offer to your wounded spirit. Your child was saved; that son, over whose untimely fate you have wept, is living."

"Lives!" she faintly exclaimed, clasping her hands fervently. "Oh, Father in Heaven, I thank thee."

"Yes, your protectress escaped with him, and caused him to be delivered into my care; until recently, he was ignorant of the relationship which exists between us, nor is it yet known to the world."

"My beloved mother, then, lives to bless me yet! I thought the tides of feeling were frozen in my heart, but this revelation infuses new life into it. I have hitherto endured existence, but now I wish it to be prolonged, that I may once more behold those who are so inexpressibly dear to me."

As she spoke, the trampling of many feet was heard in the yard, and a loud clear voice spoke, as if giving orders. A thundering knock on the door was next heard, with a demand for instant admission.

"They come, who are to bear me to infamy, and probably death," said Alwin, sternly; I will make one desperate effort, and if that fails I am lost."

He rapidly approached the window, and threw it open. It was guarded by several men; and turning from his only avenue of escape, he sullenly resigned himself to the custody of the persons who had already entered the room for the purpose of arresting him.

CHAPTER XLV.

Col. Alwin, together with Fitzgerald, was conveyed to Richmond, in Virginia, to be there tried, as the island, on which a treasonable meeting was said to have taken place, was a portion of the territory of that State. Fitzgerald obtained securities for his appearance before the next Circuit Court of the United States for Virginia, and until that time arrived, he was permitted to remain unmolested, to make such arrangements as he deemed necessary for meeting the approaching investigation. Not so Col. Alwin; popular feeling was so strongly against him, that few courtesies were shown towards him, and he was at once committed to prison to await his trial.

It was night when he first entered the gloomy walls usually tenanted by the outcasts of mankind; the wretched inmates crowded around him, and stood in silence, gazing on the celebrated man whom a wayward destiny had thus thrown among them. He bore the scrutiny with patience, but after some moments had elapsed, he placed himself in a corner of the comfortless apartment, and drawing a circle before him, charged his companions in misfortune not to trespass upon it. Then wrapping himself in his cloak, with a billet of wood for his pillow, he resigned himself to repose, with an ap-

pearance of stoical indifference, which inspired both wonder and respect in those around him.

What a change to him who had been accustomed to all the refinements of life! who had recently stretched forth his hand to grasp a sceptre!

Some time elapsed before Isabel was sufficiently recovered to travel, and when she did arrive, her father was shocked at the alteration in her appearance. He could scarcely persuade himself that the pale, drooping form he received in his arms when his prison doors opened to admit her, was his once brilliant daughter. Her spirits were weakened by illness and suffering, and she clung to him and wept with such alarming violence that he was compelled to make the interview as brief as possible.

Julie and Isabel resided with Mr. Fitzgerald, visiting Col. Alwin each day, and spending several hours with him in the prison, in which he was now allowed a private apartment. Immediately after their arrival Zavala had also made his appearance, and after a stormy interview with Col. Alwin, it appeared that he possessed the power to bend the victim of his treachery to his will, for he commanded his daughter to receive him with civility, and informed Miss de Bourg that Zavala had not relinquished his pretensions to her hand. He again became their constant, and almost only visitor, for they secluded themselves from society, under the plea of Isabel's delicate health, and the uncertain situation of Col. Alwin.

The only recreation the two girls permitted themselves, was in rambling over the less frequented portions of the picturesque hills on which Richmond is principally built. Every bright evening they were to be seen with their arms linked together, strolling out, and returning as twilight deepened into night. One evening they had wandered to a favourite place of resort, the summit of Church Hill, so called from an old church, the first one ever built in the place, which stands upon it. It was a picturesque looking building, partially covered with ivy, and surrounded by the graves of the generations that had passed away since the city was founded.

The gate which led into the cemetery was open, and Isabel expressed a wish to enter.

"Dear Isabel," said Julie, "in your present state of health you had better not visit so gloomy a place."

"I would not shrink from looking on the last home of all the living," replied Isabel, mournfully; "on the spot where I must very soon lie. I am young, Julie, but the budding beauties of spring will not greet my eyes; its flowers will bloom above my grave."

"Do not talk thus, Isabel; indeed—indeed I cannot bear it," said Julie, affectionately pressing the arm that lay heavily upon her own. "This melancholy fancy is a mere fantasy, conjured up by weakened spirits and delicate health. You will live to smile at it, dearest."

There was a pause, and they slowly walked around the graveyard.

"Look, Julie," said Isabel, calling her attention to a kneeling figure. "We are not the only visitors to this lonely place."

Julie looked in the direction she indicated, and beheld a figure wrapped in a cloak, busily employed in pulling up the weeds which grew around a highly ornamented marble tablet, overshadowed by an immense willow tree. She approached, and heard her muttering to herself—

"Shame—shame on them, to let the rank and noisome weeds overgrow that bonny one's grave, while I was away, and could not see to it myself. I will root them all out, and when the moon rides high in the heavens, I will come and hold my revels here, where none can disturb me; for she, poor thing, cannot come from her cold bed to trouble me. Ah, me! but it's a wrong world we live in!"

She then commenced rocking her body to and fro, while she chanted a mournful ditty, keeping time with the motion of her hands.

The two girls had a faint idea of having seen her before, but neither of them could call to mind when or where, until the noise of their approaching footsteps aroused her, and she looked up. They instantly recognised the fortune-teller who had been seen by them at the island. She raised her finger, and said, as she looked on the changed face of Isabel—

"So you have come to look on your bonny mamma's grave, young lady. Tread lightly, for the sod on which your foot rests is the home of a human heart. Ah, but time has dealt sorely with you, my gay bird, since I last looked on you. Do you *now* believe in the weird I read you then? You said you feared nothing I could predict for you. Have not my words proved over true, maiden? Has not the two-edged sword of sorrow and shame reached your heart! Tears—ah, I see you can weep; your grief is not deep, or tears would not come to your eyes; they never come to mine. I have prayed for them, but my heart was too hard to obtain their softening influence."

She again commenced her low chant, and the employment their appearance had interrupted. Isabel, unable to support herself, sank on the tombstone around which the old woman was busied, and wept with violence. A shade of anger passed over Theresa's face, and rudely grasping the arm of the afflicted girl, she said—

"Is this the way you treat the tablet of your own mother? Rise up, girl, and read that name on the slab."

Isabel sprang up at her words, and with eyes nearly blinded by tears, read the following words:—

"Isabel Alwin, aged 18."

"Passing away is written on the world, and all it contains."

"The wearied heart has been long at rest," said Theresa, solemnly, "but the sods were not laid on it until the last cord was broken, the

last hope torn away, which had once made its dwelling-place in that pure sanctuary. *I* told the cruel tale that blasted her youth, to be avenged on *him;* I crushed her! Ah, many is the weary hour I have watched by that grave, and mourned over the fate of the young being that lay under its green cover."

"You knew my mother then," said the deeply agitated Isabel. "Oh, if you know the cause of her early death, reveal it to her child."

"I do, young lady," said Theresa, solemnly. "It was a stricken heart. Have you ever loved, Miss Alwin? Not the love of worldlings— not the love that may pass away, as the breath-stain on glass, and be forgotten: no—no—the wild passionate love, that brings scath and desolation to the heart that harbours it. If you have felt such love, and been deceived—been compelled to tear the veil from your eyes—to find that the idol at whose shrine you have knelt and offered the purest homage of the heart was but gilded clay—that your imagination had gifted him with a nobility of nature that belonged not to him; then you may *feel* what laid this young head here. But I am talking too much—I am telling a tale I was commanded not to breathe on pain of having my worthless life taken from me. Yes— those were his words—'my worthless life,' as if my life is not of as much value as his. Ha! ha! just now, it would bring more, I fancy. Oh! he is a fearful man!"

Before Isabel could reply, she turned suddenly to Julie, and said—

"I have sought for you, and found you not; and when I had almost ceased to hope for you, you come. Where may your bonny lady mother lie? They say she came from a far country, and perished among strangers."

"My mother came from France," said Julie, gently. "I am an orphan."

"What! both father and mother dead? And do you believe that story? Why, simple as I am, I know better than that; and yet they call me crazy. The children follow me through the streets, and taunt me as the mad Theresa; but for all that I know some things better than you. Let me tell you a secret, young lady, that you would give much to know. I saw one a few days since, the sight of whom would make your eyes sparkle with pleasure. His is a blithe and a bold spirit; and it does my old heart good to look at his handsome face. There was one with him too, on whose brow was the light of a new-born hope; and the flash of his dark eye is wonderfully like your own. How do you know that your father is dead?"

"He perished with many others of the noblest sons of France. Come, Isabel, we linger too long. Let us return, or we shall scarcely reach home before nightfal."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Theresa. "You think this is some of my crazy jargon, and you do not choose to listen to me longer. You will find before long, that there's meaning in it that you dream not of. Good night, pretty ones—good night."

They walked on some distance in silence; each one absorbed in her own thoughts. At last Julie suddenly said—

"What could the woman mean by her mysterious words, and her evident allusion to Charles? He must be near us, or she could not so recently have seen him. Perhaps he is coming to attend your father's trial."

Perhaps so—I think it very likely; but do not place too much stress on yonder crazy vagrant's words, dear Julie. Of my mother she spoke so strangely; how could sorrow have reached her? such sorrow as breaks the heart, when she was my father's wife? She must have loved him, and he never could have been unkind to any creature that was attached to him. Depend upon it, she merely talked at random."

"I would fain hope not," replied Julie with a deep sigh.

Nothing more was said until they reached the door of their own dwelling. They there found Zavala and Col. Alwin in earnest conversation, as they walked to and fro the hall. An officer who had accompanied the prisoner, stood at the door watching his movements, to guard against escape. He was frequently allowed the privilege of walking out at the close of the evening, as close confinement had seriously impaired his health.

Col. Alwin was evidently angry, and his spirit seemed to chafe at the necessity of concealing it. Some mysterious power Zavala evidently possessed over his companion, whose source it was difficult to fathom. He was, as usual, calm and self-possessed: determined on gaining his purpose, he did not permit his temper for an instant to jeopardize the certainty of success. His bow to the young ladies as they passed him was as polite, and his smile as winning, as though the subject he was discussing had not called forth all the bitterness of his nature.

"How I do detest that false, cold man!" said Isabel, as they entered their own room. "His everlasting smile, and the modulated tones of his voice are so unnatural. I wonder how my father can tolerate the presence of one who has played so base a part towards him."

"Isabel, do not be so severe. Remember there is still a possibility—a faint one, I trust—but still a possibility, that I may become this man's wife."

"Good Heaven! I hope not! He—the traitor—the perjured, dishonoured renegade to the cause he had sworn to support—known as the betrayer of those who trusted him, and now summoned to this place to give his evidence against my father: *he* your husband! My father would die sooner than suffer such a misalliance."

"If it is as I suspect," replied Julie with a quivering lip and unsteady voice—"your father will have no choice. If he is in the power of Zavala, and I am again made the price of his redemption, do you think I could hesitate? No—no—I dare not think of my own happiness, when I can save him from the fate to which Zavala

would consign him, were it not for the influence over him his unhappy preference gives me."

"My poor Julie," said Isabel, tenderly embracing her; "must you then become the victim to purchase his safety? You can never love this odious man—"

"Love him," repeated Julie, with a shudder. "Oh, that I could only find something in his character to esteem. I might then hope to conquer the dislike I feel towards him. It is a terrible struggle, Isabel, when duty and inclination thus thwart each other. Until of late, a hope has sustained me that I could eventually escape from this dreaded marriage; but since Zavala's last appearance among us, I have had an intuitive foreboding of the course affairs would take. At this moment I know he is urging your father on that subject, and dictating terms to him."

There was a knock at the door, and Miss de Bourg was summoned to the parlour. When she entered she found Zavala awaiting her. He advanced, and led her to a seat; he was silent some moments, as if at a loss for words to resume a suit which had been so decidedly rejected beside the dead body of Inez. He at length said—

"Julie, you still look coldly on me. Has all my love failed utterly to win one softer feeling towards me? Do I find you as adverse as formerly to the fulfilment of our engagement?"

"More—much more so, Don Pedro," replied Julie, withdrawing the hand he endeavoured to take. "Had I ever esteemed or loved you, your conduct to my guardian would have changed those feelings into contempt and aversion. I never can consent to——"

"Stop—cruel, unfeeling as you are! Stop and hear *me!*" and his white lips quivered with passion. "Do you remember the day we stood together beside the corpse of her who truly loved me? Did I not *then* swear to you that I would yet compel you to fulfil the engagement you then broke? Now listen, and learn what your fatal beauty has accomplished. From that hour your guardian's fate was sealed. I betrayed him, that my power over *you* might not pass away. I retained papers which, if produced at his trial, will force those most leniently disposed towards him, to award him the doom of the traitor. *His* fate is in your hands. Now, Miss de Bourg, act as your *heart* dictates.'

He stopped, for he feared from her extreme paleness and agitation, that she would faint.

"Julie, dearest Julie, forgive my harshness. I love you too well to behold your sufferings without feeling what a wretch I am to render you unhappy. Pardon my strange wooing, Julie; but I must win you or die."

She motioned to him to leave her. With effort she said—

"To-morrow I will answer you. I must think. This revelation has but widened the gulf between us, yet you persist in claiming a chilled and revolted heart, as the ruling spirit of your future home.

Beware, Don Pedro Zavala; an outraged woman may become the torment of him who has forced her to debase herself in her own esteem."

"Lovely termagant! I fear you not. The iron nerve that could bend you to my will before marriage, will enable me to rule you afterwards. Adieu!—I am as certain of you now as if the words had already been said which will chain you to my triumphal car. It is something worth accomplishing to triumph over a dislike like yours. You shall love me yet, Julie, or at least you shall feign it, if you feel it not."

With an exulting smile he kissed his hand to her as he left the room. Julie threw herself on a sofa, and thought over the scene which had just passed, until her mind became a complete chaos of dark and confused emotions. Had she indeed been the cause of such overwhelming disaster to her guardian? But for the fatal love which she had inspired, he might have been at the summit of his desires. Could she then refuse to save him from the doom that hung suspended over him? After some time spent in endeavouring to compose her mind, she arose and sought her guardian. She found him still in the hall, seated near a window, with his face buried in his hands. When she spoke to him he looked up, and she saw that he was still pale from the violent excitement of his interview with Zavala. He attempted to address her, but for some moments his voice was so unsteady that it was with difficulty she understood him.

"Julie, Zavala has been with you. You know, my child, the terms on which we stand. He exacts from me another effort to move you in his favour."

"And what answer did you return, dear Sir?" inquired Julie, in a faltering tone.

"I have no choice," said he, gloomily. "I would have saved you from this marriage if it had been possible. *It is not.* I am in his power, and he knows it. He holds the sword suspended above my head, and you must bid him remove it, or suffer it to fall and destroy me."

"Is there no alternative; no other means of inducing him to withhold the evidence he has in his power to give?"

"None; he is inexorable. I have been almost tempted to say to him, 'Go, and do your worst; I will die sooner than submit to such ignoble terms.'"

"No, no; do not speak thus, dear Sir; I will fulfil this engagement. I cannot waver a moment, when I know your safety is so deeply implicated. I only ask this favour. Let the marriage be postponed as long as possible. Until after the trial is over, suffer things to remain as they are. When you are safe, I will give my hand to Don Pedro on the same evening, if he wishes it; but not before."

Col. Alwin was deeply affected at the unselfish devotion mani-

fested by his ward, and he kissed her tenderly as he thanked her. As she looked into his face, she saw that those proud eyes which usually suppressed any other emotion than softness, were filled with tears. He dashed them hastily away, as if ashamed of such wanton evidences of feeling.

CHAPTER XLVI.

It was towards the close of a clear sunny day, in the spring of the year 18— that two travellers reined up their steeds on an eminence which commands a view of the city of Richmond. One was a gentleman advanced in life, with the serious deportment of a man who had spent the best years of his life in struggling with disappointments that wear the spirit, and wither without debasing the heart.

His companion was many years younger; but his face, too, wore the shadow of deep and sorrowful thought. The glow of a brilliant sunset was fading from the sky, and its last lingering beams were reflected from the spires of the city. Below them lay the village of Manchester, in all its great beauty; the winding river, with its mimic falls, breaking in foam over the rocky ledges that obstruct its course, gleamed in the ruddy light; a small island, in the centre of the stream, was covered with a luxuriant growth of trees, which were reflected on the broken surface of the water in a thousand fantastic shapes. On the opposite side lay the city of Richmond, built on its three picturesque hills. The houses were generally surrounded by thick shrubbery, and their white walls offered a pleasant contrast to the vivid green of nature's garniture. Strikingly opposed to the lightness and elegance of the buildings, was the main street, which stretched at the base of the hills its heavy closely built houses, used principally for mercantile purposes. The Capitol, standing on the summit of Shocco Hill, and proudly overlooking the rest of the city, elicited several remarks from our travellers. The elder one said, with melancholy emphasis—

"The place is much changed since I last looked upon it, but not so much as I myself am. There the hand of man has wrought great improvements, while here (striking his hand on his breast) the will of One, to whom they are as atoms, has wrought desolation."

"Why say so now?" replied his companion. "You are about to claim one who will give a new interest to life; whose affection will repay you for all your sufferings."

"True, but I cannot look on these scenes without recalling the mournful fact. I came to this city years ago, a refugee from my native land, seeking an adored wife and an only child. I remember what visions of rapture filled my heart, as the vessel that bore me sailed up yonder river. I deemed myself certain of meeting my beloved ones, and in fancy I beheld those so long and eagerly sought,

clasped to my breast in safety. I reached the bourne of my wishes —fled with frantic haste to the house to which I had been directed, and there beheld a stranger! A similarity in circumstances, and a slight resemblance in name, had deceived the person who gave me the fallacious hopes of finding in her the wife I sought. Ah, Charles, what words shall paint the agony that then overwhelmed me? I continued my search throughout every portion of the United States, and until I met with you, I gained no clue to the fate of those I loved better than life. Now I go to seek one who has been reared among strangers, and taught to yield her affections, her obedience, to the protector of her childhood. Do you indeed think she can give to me the love my yearning heart will crave? I fear I shall be too exacting."

"Never too much so for her," said the young man, eagerly. "If I know her heart, it will bound to meet, and cling to yours, with all the devotion a father can require."

"Ah, Charles, you speak as a lover, and one on whom disappointment has seldom fallen. I fear to anticipate good, dreading that evil may be present with me. But let us hasten; if we linger thus, night will overtake us before we get into the town."

They put spurs to their horses, and soon arrived at the principal hotel. On entering the house, they found it crowded with persons who had been drawn thither by the trial of Col. Alwin, which had commenced several weeks before. Every group they encountered was discussing the proceedings of the judicial investigation, which was then agitating the whole Union. Among the crowd, the younger traveller recognised several acquaintances; he approached one of them, and inquired—

"How fares it with Col. Alwin, Mr. Banks?"

The person thus addressed, looked serious as he replied—

"No one can as yet tell what the result of his trial will be. Heretofore, there has been no evidence offered which can implicate him in a treasonable conspiracy against the government. It is whispered by some that this Spaniard, who is constantly with him, has proofs, if he would bring them forward; but Alwin has found means to induce him to withhold them. I must confess that I do not wish them to come to light; I consider him sufficiently punished in being dragged before the tribunal of his country, to answer to the charges preferred against him. The tide of popular opinion is strongly against him just now, and it would go hard with him, if proofs against him should be brought forward. If you were to see Col. Alwin's daughter, and the wife of Fitzgerald, you could not forbear wishing them to be acquitted, even if you believed them to be both guilty."

"As to the guilt of Fitzgerald," replied Russell, "it is but justice to believe that he was infatuated and dazzled by the prospects held out to him, without believing that any injury was designed towards the country in which he had found an asylum."

"That is the ground his counsel have taken. To-morrow, Wirt speaks in his defence, and we are on the *qui vive*, expecting one of the most eloquent harangues that has yet been made. It seems a strange inconsistency in human nature, which induces a man already in possession of all that can render life desirable, to risk its loss by grasping at more. Such was eminently the case with Fitzgerald: what had he to do with the feverish desire—the withering selfishness of ambition? If he could not be contented in the lot Providence had assigned him, he scarcely deserves happiness. I have seen his wife in court, day after day, since the trial has been progressing; and I own, when I looked on her pale face, bowed in anguish on her bosom, I could scarcely excuse the husband who could peril her happiness by joining in so desperate an adventure as this has proved."

In the ensuing conversation Russell learned that Col. Alwin had been removed from the jail, and was then confined in the upper apartments of the Penitentiary, which afforded a more comfortable and secure lodging for him. After seeing his fellow-traveller accommodated with a room, he wandered out in search of it without any more definite object in view than to see the walls which inclosed his father. A boy guided him to the gloomy place he sought, which was some distance from the city.

A solitary light gleamed from an upper casement, and he could fancy his stern and haughty parent there, alone with the whirlwind of passions that must fill his soul, as the conviction darkened upon it, that he, the aspiring, the undaunted, was really a prisoner, awaiting the sentence of his country's laws on his very existence.

In a few moments the door opened, and two figures issued from the building. As they passed the lamp which hung at the entrance, Russell recognised in one of them a legal gentleman who acted as counsellor to Col Alwin. Having a slight acquaintance with him he immediately joined him, and learned from him all the proceedings of the trial which had already taken place.

"If you wish to master all the details of the case, Mr. Russell," he concluded, "and will accompany me to my office, I shall be happy to allow you to look over the papers which are in my possession. I believe you were a portion of the time on the island; and, perhaps, may be able to furnish some information that may be important in the defence I intend making."

Russell gladly availed himself of the offer, and accompanied him at once to his office, where the night was spent in mastering the cause in which was involved the happiness of all that was dear to him.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Early on the following morning the whole city was alive with persons who had crowded into it from all portions of the Union, to hear the close of the trial, which had attracted the deepest interest from the celebrity of the principal individual, and the novel nature of the charge preferred against him.

Russell had passed a busy night, and with the dawn of morning he walked out to refresh his exhausted mind, and to calm his feelings for the business of the day.

When the deep-toned bell gave the signal for the court to commence its proceedings, he lingered on the outside of the Capitol, watching the crowds that poured into it, until he was joined by Mr. ——. With difficulty they made their way to the place appointed for the lawyers, and when there, Russell almost feared to look towards the prisoner. He dreaded to find the weight of years added to his appearance by the occurrences of the past few months; but when he did glance at that unbending front and inscrutable face, he felt surprised at his own fears.

Col. Alwin was standing with his arms folded on his breast, his clear eye steadily regarding the crowd that looked on him; there was no shrinking in that eagle glance—no consciousness that he was regarded as a criminal by those before him. Calm, proud, and self-possessed, he did not permit a sign of suffering to escape him. The lines around the mouth were a little deepened, and the broad brow bore a few more furrows than when Russell had last looked on him. These were the only visible tokens of the storm which had swept over him, levelling his haughty aspirations with the dust—leaving him without a hope of ever regaining the height from which he had fallen. Yet, beneath that outward calm, who shall dare to penetrate? Who shall dare to rend the veil from that fearful prison house—the heart of him whose ambition had been the idol of his life, thus dragged before the tribunal of his country, branded with the name of traitor? Who shall paint the fearful anguish of that high-hearted man—the humiliations which poured their floods of bitterness over his proud and fiery soul, as he stood there a marvel and a wonder to the gazing crowd that surrounded him?

By his side was Fitzgerald. He also was composed in his bearing; but his cheeks were sunken, his eyes heavy, and his whole appearance bore the stamp of the deepest dejection and anxiety. His eyes constantly wandered to a distant part of the building where his wife and the daughters of Col. Alwin were seated. A curtain was drawn in front of them; and as Russell followed the direction of Fitzgerald's eyes, he caught a glimpse of a pallid face, looking from behind its folds, and a slight gesture assured him that Isabel had recognised him, even amidst that crowd.

The cause was opened in due form, and the defender of Fitzgerald

one of America's most gifted sons, a man she must ever be proud to claim as one of her brightest ornaments, arose from his seat. A deep hush fell over that dense crowd as the clear full tones of the speaker's voice rolled through the wide hall, each modulation distinctly heard in its remotest corner. In language of glowing eloquence he described that paradise which the tempter, like a second serpent, had marred. He described Col. Alwin as the subtle fiend, casting his spells over his victim with sure and deadly intent, to destroy his peace and respectability. By the mighty power of genius he bore his audience along with him, now melting into pity over the anguish of the wife and mother, now thrilling with indignation as the arts which had deceived the unhappy prisoner were dwelt on.

He finished; and as he sank back upon his seat, loud murmurs of applause greeted him. Before the excitement subsided, one of the opposite counsel arose—a young man of modest and pleasing exterior. Many wondered that he should dare to reply to the burst of eloquence to which they had just listened; but although very pale, he did not appear the least daunted. At first his voice was low, and the few opening sentences were inaudible, except to those immediately around him; but he soon obtained the mastery over the painful feelings which struggled in his breast, and his deep-toned voice rang over the crowded assembly as clear and bold as that of his predecessor. He described that lovely island home as he had seen it, with eloquence little inferior to that of his opponent, and showed wherein imagination had veiled the truth. He described the owner of that Eden as one weary of the solitude in which he lived, eager for action, yet weakly wavering, until a bolder spirit dared to point out to him the means of attaining his wishes. He showed that he had been warned, and refused to listen; that he had willingly grasped the glittering bubble, which had burst and drawn destruction on his head.

When Col. Alwin heard the first tones of the speaker's voice, he started forward to assure himself that his ears had not deceived him; and as he ascertained the identity of his defender, a flush mounted even to his pale temples; but no other sign of emotion was visible throughout the whole time.

"Well done, my young friend! A grateful heart has indeed inspired you," said Mr.——, as Russell sank back on his seat, exhausted by the long and energetic speech he had just uttered.

"Who is this young man?" was murmured among the crowd

"I do not know. A protégé, I believe, of Col. Alwin," was the reply.

"Let him be who he may, he is a noble hearted fellow; ay, and one of sound mind too," said a bluff old man, who had listened with the deepest attention to every word that fell from the lips of Russell.

The sheriff commanded order in court, and the Chief Justice arose, and in a concise and masterly manner, summed up the evi-

dence which had been brought forward on the trial. He then seated himself, and the jury retired to their chamber.

Fitzgerald buried his face in his hands, and his nervous restlessness betrayed his anxiety as to the result. No change took place either in the countenance or position of Col. Alwin, until the jury returned. Immovable as a block of granite, he appeared the most unconcerned one amid that vast crowd, as to the result of their deliberations.

When they had re-appeared, and seated themselves, he suddenly leaned forward, and listened eagerly for the words of the foreman; and a gleam of triumph crossed his expressive features as he heard them.

"We, the jury, say that Frederic Alwin is *not* proved to be guilty under this indictment, by any evidence submitted to us. We therefore pronounce him Not Guilty."

He was proceeding to make a similar report respecting the decision on Fitzgerald's case, when a stifled shriek interrupted the proceedings of the court, and a way was opened through the crowd for the fainting form of a lady, to be borne out. It was the excited and sensitive Isabel, who had persisted in attending the last day of the trial, although her health was much too feeble to render such a course prudent.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

When Russell left the Capitol he avoided his father, and escaped as quickly as possible from the crowd of persons who pressed around him, to offer their congratulations on his successful defence. At that moment his mind was occupied with far different thoughts; he hastened to the hotel, and with a light step sprang up the flight of stairs leading to the room of his companion of the preceding day. He found him eagerly expecting him.

"What news?—ah! I see it is joyful."

"Yes; he is free—cleared—and I have been partly instrumental in accomplishing this. Oh, my dear friend, I am the happiest fellow alive."

"And I, too, am happy, Charles. Happy in my sympathy with your delight, and far, far happier in my own anticipations of joy. I have seen her, boy, and never did my heart thrill with such rapture as when I gazed on the sweet face of my daughter, and felt the exultation of a fond, proud father. If her mind is as lovely as her person, I am too blessed."

"Have you spoken to her, or made yourself known?" inquired Russell, in some surprise.

"No—it was merely by accident that I obtained a view of her. I have been lingering about the house all day, and was only withheld from entering by my promise to you not to seek her until this trial

was over, and her protector safe. Late this evening, as she accompanied Miss Alwin home, I saw her,—I heard her speak as she passed me. Ah! that voice betrayed my child at once: it was that of her dead mother, and my heart grew faint within me as I listened to its tones. I leaned on the palings around their yard, and looked at her: her eye met mine with an expression of surprise, but it melted into a sweet smile, as she bowed as if recognising an acquaintance. Oh, Charles, I do not wonder that you love her! I already adore her!"

"How could you restrain yourself from rushing forward and claiming her as your child?"

"Ah! that would have been too much like a hero fashioned by one of my own countrymen. You forget, too, that with me the age of impulse is past, and I anticipate far more rational enjoyment in revealing myself this evening to her guardian, and claiming my daughter at his hands. Besides, this Zavala is to be dealt with."

It had been arranged that the marriage of Julie should take place on the evening of the acquittal of her guardian, as Zavala would not consent to postpone his reward longer than the freedom of Col. Alwin placed it out of his power to use the papers in his possession to his detriment. The ceremony was to be as private as possible, and again Julie saw the evening approach which was to give her to him, with feelings of even deeper repugnance than she had before felt. Let her sufferings be what they might, she had determined that she would not permit them to be visible to her beloved protector. His spirit was already sufficiently harassed, without permitting him to see the extent of the wretchedness she had inflicted on herself to save him. Late in the evening she walked out in the extensive garden which surrounded their abode, that she might indulge her emotions unobserved, and escape for a few moments from the sound of human voices, for it seemed to her that all sounded cold and unfeeling. She threw herself on a rustic seat, and unclosed a small case containing a miniature of Russell. It was the last look of sorrowing affection on the features of the only being she feared she could ever regard with that deep and enduring love her heart was so eminently formed to feel, and tears gathered slowly on her long lashes, and fell on the inanimate resemblance. She pressed it to her lips, and kissed the lucid drops from the glass that covered it, as she murmured—

"It surely is not wrong to look on him for the last time. After this evening, I must forget my feelings towards him. I will repress them or die; but now I must weep over lost happiness and disappointed dreams. Oh, would that this weight of wretchedness could be removed from my heart!"

"Who talks of wretchedness?" said a voice close behind her. She started in alarm, and looking up, beheld Theresa standing beneath the shadow of a neighbouring tree.

"Who talks of wretchedness where I am? Dare *you* speak of it with that unwrinkled brow and raven hair? Mine turned white in

a night, and I am not one to grieve either over much, where calamity is not of that overwhelming kind that crushes both hope and reason at a single blow. What sorrow have you known, daughter of hope and affection? Have you ever watched beside the bed of one who was dearest of all earth's creatures, while the fluttering spirit was hovering on the brink of eternity? Have you felt the clasp of the cold fingers grow fainter and fainter until they parted from their hold? Have you seen the eye gazing into yours with that earnestness which seems as if the spirit would carry into the grave the remembrance of your features, grow dim and sightless? Then, and only then, have you seen the shadows of the night of affliction closing around you, and darkening all your future life. Speak not of sorrow, maiden—you know not what it is. Tell me the cause of your unhappiness: perhaps I may be able to give you some comfort —some hope amid despondency. You are robed as a bride, and your cheek is as colourless as your dress. Can you be on the eve of marrying that dark villain who compassed the destruction of your guardian's fine schemes? Speak—is it so?

"It is; but of what interest can that be to you, my good woman?"

"Nothing to me, perhaps, but worth knowing to one I have much cause to love; and for his sake I would save you from this marriage. What end can your guardian now serve by forcing you into such a measure?"

"You speak strangely. How do you know it is not my wish to marry him?"

"Ha! ha! and you think to deceive me! Ah! young one, your face reveals a different story to that your lips utter. Does the dove mate with the vulture? No, lady—the heart that has once loved Charles Russell may not lightly forget that love, and least of all, for such a rival as your guardian would give him. Good bye—I must hurry away to tell my news to those it most concerns; for it takes a long head and a short wit to keep even with Alwin."

She turned away, and walked rapidly towards the lower part of the garden, where there was a gate, which communicated with a back street. The reflections of Julie on this strange apparition were interrupted by the voice of Isabel, calling on her name. She immediately arose, and returned with her to the house.

Only a few persons besides the family had been invited to witness the ceremony; and at the hour appointed, Col. Alwin entered the room in which Julie sat, endeavouring to wear an air of serenity. He trembled as he folded her to his heart, and informed her that Zavala and the clergyman had arrived, and only awaited her presence in the next apartment.

"One moment; one short moment more," said Julie, in irrepressible agitation.

"I will allow you five, my love. At the end of that time I hope you will be more composed."

"I will—I will," she hurriedly replied, and the door closed on

his retiring figure. Never was a more fervent prayer offered up at the throne of the Most High, than that which sprang from the breaking heart of the unhappy girl, as she stood with her hands clasped over her throbbing brow. By a powerful effort she stifled the rush of overwhelming emotion, which threatened to destroy all the calmness she had been able to attain.

Leaning on the arm of the only being who fully understood her feelings, Julie at the end of the promised time proceeded to the sitting room. Col. Alwin met her at the door, and placing her hand in that of the triumphant Zavala, proceeded to the parlour, where the party had assembled that was to witness the espousals of the lovely, but unhappy looking creature, who clung to the arm of Isabel, as if for support in the trying scene before her.

A mist seemed to fall over her sight, and for an instant her senses reeled. The first words she heard the minister utter were—

"All who have any objection to these two persons being joined in marriage, speak now, or for ever after hold their peace."

There was an almost imperceptible pause, and the clergyman was about to proceed, when a slight movement was made near the door, and a full, clear voice, said—

"I do; forbear, old man; commit not so cruel and impious an act, as to join together those who stand before you."

Every one looked around in amazement, and Col. Alwin haughtily said—

"Who dares to interrupt the ceremony? Advance, whoever you may be, and allege your objections to my ward being given in marriage to this gentleman."

A figure advanced from the door, wrapped in a large cloak, with his hat pulled over his brow, in such a manner as to conceal all except the lower part of his face. He walked slowly up to the bridal group, and said deliberately —

"*I* object to this young lady being bestowed on that person who holds her hand, and I have a good right to do so."

"And who the devil are you?" exclaimed Zavala, laying his hand on his dagger, with a menacing air.

The stranger dropped his cloak, and exhibited a tall, graceful figure, arrayed in the brilliant uniform of the guards of the unhappy Louis XVI.; then removing his hat, he threw back thick clusters of slightly silvered hair, and exposed a countenance which time and sorrow had furrowed, but which still retained traces of great manly beauty.

Every eye present glanced from the noble face thus exhibited, to that of the pale and shrinking bride; and all could discern a marked resemblance to him who thus claimed the right to control her destiny.

Had the eye of the stranger possessed the fatal power attributed to that of the Caliph Vathek, it could not have wrought a more instantaneous effect on Zavala. His face became of a deathlike hue,

and he glared on the intruder as if he doubted the evidence of his senses.

"I, Sir, am the Comte de Bourg," said he, as he threw his arm around the form of his daughter, and drew her from the side of Zavala. "I have to thank you, Sir, for your unremitting exertions to obtain the restoration of my forfeited estates. I have seen the French ambassador, and am fully aware of the extent of the service you have rendered me. If I mistake not, I have also to thank you for this," and he held up his hand, bound up as if a wound had been recently inflicted upon it. "Begone, Sir, and leave this city within the hour, or I will have you arrested for an attempt to assassinate me."

Utterly confounded by the sudden turn events had taken, and knowing his own guilt, Zavala hurriedly departed, without even a word of farewell. De Bourg folded his daughter to his heart, and said—

"For the first time for many, many years, you are pressed to a father's heart, my Julie. Blame him not for having delayed to claim you, for only a few weeks have elapsed since he learned with certainty that he yet possessed a living child."

Then turning to Col. Alwin, he said—

"To you, noble-hearted man, I owe more than life, for the preservation of this lovely flower, and for the kindness you bestowed on the angel who is now in heaven. Receive my thanks—my earnest, heartfelt thanks."

"You owe me none," replied Alwin, with emotion. "Her tender affection has been to me more than a sufficient reward for the cares I have bestowed upon her. You arrived just in time to save your daughter from a union she detested; and had I known that a parent still lived to claim her obedience, I should not have permitted her to sacrifice herself for my sake."

"Think no more of that," replied De Bourg, quickly. "She only acted as her duty to you prompted; but since the sacrifice is no longer necessary, she will find that she has escaped from one lover only to bestow this fair hand on another. It has long been promised to one who has become as a son to me."

"My father," said Julie, concealing her face on his breast, "do you wish to throw me off so soon as you recover me? I shall be too happy to remain with you. Pray think no more of this new marriage; it will make me wretched."

"We shall see that," said the father, smiling affectionately on her. "I shall consult your inclinations, my love, and if your repugnance to the union cannot be overcome, you shall act as you please."

Julie murmured her thanks, and he turned towards the door, and said—

"Advance, my young friend, and claim the reward of your constancy."

Russell entered, and advanced towards the amazed group; Col. Alwin met him, and cordially grasped his hand, while he uttered many warm thanks for the service he had that morning rendered him.

"My noble boy," he concluded, "is it indeed you who have been instrumental in making this happy discovery?"

De Bourg saw the emotion pictured in Russell's countenance, and answered for him.

"You are indebted to him for much more than you are aware, ol. Alwin; for myself, I thus repay the obligations he has con-.erred on me."

As he spoke, he placed the hand of his daughter in that of Russell. One look between the lovers had been sufficient: the dark gulf which had separated them was annihilated; their affection had stood the test of time and trial, and had come forth pure and unchanged.

Once more the clergyman was called on to perform the sacred ceremony which had been so strangely interrupted; and now the fair bride no longer clung as a lifeless weight to the arm on which she leaned. She was deeply agitated by the varied emotions which had passed through her mind during the evening; but her low voice was unfaltering as she uttered the vows which her heart so deeply ratified.

"And now," said Col. Alwin, when the congratulations to the newly-married pair were over, "do inform us how this happy denouement has been brought about. I am entirely at a loss to account for the mastery you seemed to possess over Zavala."

"Willingly," replied the Comte de Bourg. "Come here, my child; let me sit with your hand clasped in mine, and feel the 'sober certainty of waking bliss,' while I relate the history of my life."

With Julie by his side, and the rest of the group around him, De Bourg recounted the following story.

"You are, perhaps, aware, my friends, that I held a post of high honour in the court of France, during the reign of the unfortunate Louis. I stayed by my sovereign until the last moment of his life; and I despaired not of the regeneration of my unhappy country, until I saw him fall on the scaffold. During the terrible days of proscription that followed, I, among many others, was pointed out for destruction. A friend warned me in time, and I fled to my chateau, where my wife and child were residing. Hurried preparations were made for our departure to a foreign land, and we set out for the sea coast where we were to embark.

"A considerable party accompanied us, consisting of persons similarly situated. We arrived at the appointed spot in safety; and the women and children were already placed on board of an American vessel which awaited us, when a party of soldiers, sent in pursuit, suddenly appeared. Five of the number were taken, after a short but terrible struggle. Wounded severely—frantic from my ineffectual efforts to escape the wretches who held me in captivity, I beheld

the vessel make sail, with my beloved Julie stretching forth her arms towards me; and her agonized cries were borne over the waters to my stricken soul. Oh! my friends, from that dark hour to the present, I have never known a moment of happiness.

"I was taken to Paris, and after a long imprisonment was condemned to be executed on the same spot on which the beautiful Marie Antoinette had perished a few weeks before. I had resigned myself to my fate, and was hourly expecting to be the next victim dragged from my cell to expiate the crime of being more nobly born, and more gently nurtured than my judges, when the door of my cell opened, and a young woman entered. In some surprise I recognised the wife of one of the party then in power, to whom I had rendered a service of considerable importance some years before. Madame —— was not ungrateful; she came to save me from the fate that menaced me, and she brought with her a disguise and passport for England.

After many difficulties I succeeded in reaching Dover; and after visiting London to claim the wreck of my fortune from the bankers in whose care it had been placed, I sailed for New York. All my endeavours were vain to trace my wife and child. For years I wandered over the different states, deluded by descriptions, resembling those I sought, into the belief that I should soon be successful.

"At length, wearied with the fruitlessness of the search, I left the haunts of civilized men, and journeyed on foot through the wilderness, until I reached Gallipolis, in Ohio. There was a settlement of the natives of my own country, who, like myself, had fled from the persecutions of the Reign of Terror. I remained among them but a few months. The sufferings of my life, and the terrible uncertainty that weighed on my mind relative to the fate of my wife and child, unfitted me for communion with any human being. I adopted the life of a hunter, and lived utterly secluded from all society, until my young friend here accidentally discovered my abode. He, like myself, was unhappy, and the sympathy in our feelings drew us together. He remained with me until a communication from one of the few friends I possessed in this country induced me to travel to Baltimore, expecting that I had at last gained a clue to lead me to those I so eagerly desired to find.

"Many months passed before Russell and myself again met; then, in compliance with his earnest request, I related my history to him, and divulged my true name, for I had dropped my title, and assumed the name of my mother, who was an Englishwoman, soon after my arrival in this country. What was my rapture and astonishment to learn that my daughter lived, and was all the fondest father could wish!

"But I have forestalled this part of my story. While in Baltimore, I learned the name of the French ambassador to this country, and found that he was an old acquaintance of mine. I felt a desire to see him, and visited Washington for that purpose. He appeared

much pleased to meet with me, and informed me that the solicitations which had been addressed to the First Consul in my behalf, had induced him to restore to me the enjoyment of my forfeited patrimony. You may judge of my astonishment at such news. inquired who had instigated these proceedings, and learned that it was a gentleman of Spanish descent, of the name of Zavala. From that moment I was convinced that my wife or daughter was still in existence, and it was for their benefit this restoration had been solicited. I inquired into the circumstances of Zavala, and learned that he held a large amount of property in his possession; but during several years, spent in the capital of the Republic, he had gambled to such an extent as to involve his estates deeply. I ascertained that he was in this place, attending a trial, and immediately came hither.

"On my way I accidentally encountered Russell, journeying to the same spot, and it was then I related to him the events of my life, and informed him of the object of my present journey. He speedily showed to me why Zavala had so deeply interested himself about my property, and I pledged myself to Charles not to reveal myself until after the trial was decided. He had sanguine hopes of a happy termination to it, and he wished our re-union to be unclouded by a fear for the future. I wrote to Zavala, informing him of my arrival, and requesting an interview with him. He made no answer; but this evening I had wandered to the outskirts of the town, and about twilight, as I was hastening to the hotel to join Russell, in order to proceed thither to claim my child, I was suddenly attacked by a man in a cloak and mask. I succeeded in disarming him, and tore the mask from his face, but I had been wounded in the encounter, and he escaped from me. When I reached the hotel, I found an old woman with Russell, who had sought him out to inform him of the intended marriage of Julie, and, so soon as my hand was dressed, we lost no time in coming hither. To my amazement, I beheld in the groom the same man who had attempted my life an hour before. We arrived just at the critical moment, and now you have the whole story."

They all thanked him, and after some moments Col. Alwin thoughtfully said:—

"I am glad that Julie was saved from Zavala, but I fear he has it in his power to work me mischief yet, by exposing some documents in his possession."

Russell drew forth a packet, and presented it to his father.

"These, Sir, will, I hope, relieve your mind from all apprehensions respecting Zavala. We had another encounter while travelling towards this place, in which I conquered. I then forced him to deliver up every paper in his possession which had the slightest bearing on your late enterprise."

"And to you I owe my life, my noble boy, and not to his forbearance; although it was to be purchased at such a price!"

Isabel uttered her animated thanks, and as Russell caught the half-withdrawn glance of gratitude from his lovely bride, he felt that he was indeed blessed.

CHAPTER XLIX.

The last beams of the setting sun streamed into the open windows of an apartment in the vicinity of the city, and the eyes of one of its inmates gazed on the purple and golden clouds that floated on the edge of the horizon with the consciousness that it was the last time they would ever rest on such a scene in this world. She was contented that it should be so, for misery seemed to have been her allotted portion in life. A few brief intervals of happiness had been succeeded by the anguish which only those feel who have cherished hopes until they have entwined themselves with their very existence, and then have seen them disappointed.

The invalid was supported by pillows, and her eyes were alternately turned from the contemplation of the heavens towards the door of the apartment, as if eagerly expecting the arrival of some one. Her features were thin and attenuated, and her breath came heavily, and with much apparent difficulty, from her half-parted lips; yet, even in the shadow of death, for it was evident his hand was on the heart that once beat so wildly, enough of beauty still remained to show that she had once been one of nature's fairest daughters.

Beside the bed, watching every motion of the dying one with eager interest, was a woman in the decline of life. The features of this person were originally harsh; and time, exposure, and suffering had deepened these traits; but now some powerful emotion appeared to be struggling in her breast, which imparted an expression of feeling and sympathy, not often found upon her wrinkled face. Tears were in her dark glittering eyes, and ever and anon she arose from her seat, went to the window, and looked forth as if watching for the arrival of some one.

It was Theresa, and that fragile being, who was fast fading from the earth, was the mother of Russell. She had dragged her dying form almost to the threshold of his door, and was compelled to stop from successive faintings, which threatened to end her life before she accomplished the end she had suffered so much to attain. The small roadside tavern at which the carriage drew up was a favourite place of resort with Theresa; and when the insensible form of the sick lady was lifted from it by her attendants, she instantly recognised the child of her adoption. When Aileen recovered, she explained to Theresa the manner of her escape, and desired that a messenger should be immediately despatched to Col. Alwin and her son, to inform them of her situation.

"They come not, my mother," said the invalid, in a faint tone

"my hours are numbered, and I fear they will not reach here in time for me to look upon my son. I have prayed for death. Oh! how anxiously I have looked forward to that bourne whence no traveller returns, as my only resting-place, yet who shall tell the bitterness of dying thus, without once more beholding my child! I remember his sweet bright face as I last beheld it, as though a day had only passed since then. On the evening we were shipwrecked, you snatched him from my arms, as the waves swept over us, and from that hour of agony, I have never beheld my boy. If I am permitted to live to fold him to my bosom, to hear his voice, I shall be contented to sink into that repose which shall not be disturbed with dreams of the past. But to perish without beholding him, when I have dragged my weary and feeble body nearly to his presence! I could not wish my most bitter enemy a more severe trial; yet if it is the will of heaven, I can endure even this bitter pang; it will be of short duration."

Exhausted by speaking, she closed her eyes, and remained silent and motionless. Life was fast ebbing from her feeble frame, and Theresa approached and knelt beside the couch, while she tried to pray that a few more hours might be granted to the blighted form before her.

"Lean down to me, mother," she at length said, "that I may give you my last injunctions. When my poor boy arrives, tell him that I have loved him with all the devotion a mother's heart may feel—tell him that my last prayer was for his happiness—my last word a blessing."

"I will," replied Theresa, "but you will see them, my darling. God would not be so unkind as to snatch you away at such a moment. Hark! I hear the sound of their horses' hoofs upon the pathway."

As she spoke, two gentlemen alighted at the gate, and in another moment Russell and Col. Alwin were in the chamber of death. Russell rushed towards the bed, knelt beside it, and clasped the cold hands which lay upon the coverlet, as he exclaimed—

"My mother! oh, have I found but to lose you!"

The dying woman, with all her remaining energy concentrated in one mighty effort, raised herself from her pillow, and in a voice that thrilled the hearts of her hearers with its unearthly pathos, said—

"My prayer has been heard! Charles—my child, my dear son, come nearer to me. Lean forward, that my dimmed and failing eyes may behold you. Push back the hair from my brow—bring light—air—I suffocate. Oh, God! to die as he is kneeling by my side! to hear his voice ringing in my ears, and know they must soon be deaf to it! to feel that he is beside me, and I cannot see him! Bend down that I may feel your warm breath on my cheek: oh, for one moment's sight to carry with me the memory of that face, even into the cold grave."

Russell leaned forward, and stretching forth her emaciated hand, she drew it slowly over his features. The expression of agony passed away, and sinking back upon her pillow, she murmured in a low, fervent tone—

"My God, I thank thee! I am now ready to go."

"Aileen," said a trembling voice, "Aileen, are you ready to bid adieu to life without one word to him you once loved? In your last hour are you forgetful of the wild idolatry with which I once regarded you? Does this boy take from me all your thoughts?"

"Frederick," said the lady, once more raising the dark fringes that curtained her eyes, and turning their sightless orbs upon him, with an expression that haunted him for many long years, "I have loved you with a devotion that should have been bestowed on no earthly creature. I will not now allude to past events: your contrition for them has been great, and your sufferings have also been many. You have my forgiveness for all I have endured; believe me, I am not unmindful of your presence. I am naturally more occupied with a son, who is restored to me after a separation I so long considered final."

"And why should you think of him, who has been the curse of your life?" muttered Theresa. "I am sure your own child should be dearer to you than he whose mad temper gave you a wretched life, and a lingering death,—than he, on whose hand is the stain of blood, never to be forgiven or washed away."

"Peace—peace," cried the dying woman, whose ear caught the sense of Theresa's muttered speech. "Do not now bring forward causes of reproach; let my last moments pass in peace. My mother, let me die with the consciousness that Alwin has your forgiveness."

"As much as a broken heart can grant him, he has—at by your dying bed, do not ask me to say that I will act as if I had forgotten the past. I cannot."

"My son, draw nearer to me," said Aileen, whose fleeting senses scarce understood the meaning of the words of Theresa. Russell arose from his kneeling position, and seating himself on the side of the bed, drew the dying form of his mother to his breast. She made a last effort to raise herself, and press her icy lips to his brow. She again sank back—her eyes closed, one long struggling sigh burst from her bosom, and all that remained of the once beautiful and adored Aileen Clifton was dust.

"The spirit has passed away," said Theresa, as she looked on the fixed features. Then turning to Col. Alwin, she continued—

"In this hour I will forbear uttering reproaches—your own heart will suggest too many. I crave your departure from this room. Leave her, whose feelings you have so outraged in life, to the care of the only being who has never ceased to love her as the purest and gentlest of human beings."

"Silence," said Alwin, in a stern tone "Leave me alone with

the dead, a few brief moments. I have wronged her, but she has been dearly avenged. Go, go; I would be alone."

Seeing the strong effort his father made to repress his emotion, Russell drew Theresa away, and gently closing the door as he retired, Alwin was left alone with the corpse of the only being who had ever caused his heart to turn from the thorny path of ambition to the more flowery one of love.

He had felt for her that passionate idolatry of which men of his haughty and vehement temper are alone susceptible. Gentle, yet enduring, had been her influence over his feelings, in her presence his dreams of pride and power had lost their spell, and he was happy in yielding himself to the delightful influence of love.

His late misfortunes had subdued his spirits, and he stood beside that death-bed a different being from him who, a few short months before, had looked forward to a life of enterprise and renown. All —all had perished from his grasp. The fate he had deprecated was awarded to him; a life of insignificance—a name handed down to posterity as that of a traitor to his country. As these thoughts forced themselves on him, the aspiring mind which had sought to rule over others, could no longer enable him to control his own emotions. He did not weep, for the age of weeping was past, and he would have scorned himself had tears been wrung from his iron soul, even if they would have saved his over-burdened heart from breaking.

He gazed with an immovable, stony expression, on the marble features before him. He recalled the hour in which he had first seen her; the emotions the singular beauty of that face had elicited, then radiant with life and youth, the song bursting from her lips, and the brightness of untried hopes upon her brow. Now she lay before him, a blighted, stricken being, who had long looked forward to death as freedom from suffering.

Had she known the being in whose hands she was placing her destiny, she would never have suffered herself to love him. Had she understood that impetuous and unbending nature, she would never have given him her gay heart.

He remembered how often those eyes, now closed in "death's cold oblivion," had turned on him with an expression of such unutterable tenderness as those orbs could only express. Once he could have died for her; yet he had been wrought on to believe her the most perfidious of her sex, and in a moment of frenzy he had cast her from him as unworthy to hold a place in his thoughts. He had obtained forgiveness; but now it appeared to him the atonement he had endeavoured to make, was feeble and insufficient; and he would have given all he possessed to recal life to the form before him for one brief hour, that he might utter all his anguish and repentance, and again hear her soft voice pronounce the words of forgiveness.

'She is happy," he murmured. "She is at last at peace. Happi-

ness! what is it? Can there be any reality in the phantom we all seek, and never attain? Ever in pursuit of what we have not, we rush on to the dark gulf which awaits us all, without grasping the deluding mirage. I have sought it in all things, and found it in none. I fancied it would be found in love, but that brought madness and deeper wretchedness than I had yet known. I then turned to ambition; that brought with it feverish dreams—years of contention, and finally disappointment. When I thought the long sought good within my grasp, then—then I was furthest from its attainment. For what are we placed in this wretched world but to struggle against a wayward destiny, and curse the fate which has been allotted to us?"

He paused, and a small, still voice whispered to him—

"We are not to expect happiness as the reward of ungovernable passions and an ambition which has no limits."

CHAPTER L.

Turn we to a scene of brighter promise. Several years have passed, bringing with them the usual changes that time works. The reader will accompany me to one of the stately mansions of the Old Dominion. It had passed from the possession of the former proprietors to those who now inhabit it, by purchase. It was a lofty fabric, built soon after the settlement of the country, and many additions of a more modern date had been made by its successive proprietors. Magnificent oaks coeval with the building, cast their giant arms over the extensive lawn, the closely shaven grass of which was as green as an emerald. Beneath the shade of one of them, sat an aged woman, with her eyes listlessly following the motions of a boy of four years, who was trundling a hoop over the ground, and as the breeze blew back his curls, a face of great infantine loveliness was revealed.

On the portico stood the mother of that bright-looking being, watching his graceful movements with a smiling lip. Seated near her was her husband, reading a newspaper. She laid her hand on his arm—

"Do look at Frederick. Would he not make a charming picture?"

The gentleman looked up good-humouredly, as he replied—

"You make such an idol of that boy, Julie, that I am almost tempted to be jealous sometimes."

"Ah!" she said, earnestly, "you know full well that I never love him half so dearly as when I look into his eyes, and read *your* soul in their expression. Were it not for him, what should I do, when your are immersed in the employments belonging to your profession and have no time to think of me!"

"That hour has yet to arrive," replied Russell, rising and standing

beside her. "In my busiest moments, your image flits over my fancy, brightening the dullest and most common-place engagements. Ah! Julie, *our* love is not the perishing flower of a day, but a feeling which blends with every aspiration of the soul, and consecrates the heart to the unfading brightness of our affection."

Russell had been successful in life beyond his utmost ambition. He valued the joys of domestic life far above the distinctions his acknowledged talents might easily have won. He occupied a high standing in his profession, but he steadily refused to aspire beyond that. The charms of his home were too dearly prized to sacrifice them for a distant and doubtful good.

Immediately after his marriage, his father had purchased and presented to him the mansion in which he now resided, which was situated within a few miles of the city of Richmond. The Comte de Bourg, after remaining several months with his daughter, had accompanied Col. Alwin to France: the former to reclaim his recovered estates, the latter to endeavour to forget, in the excitement of foreign travel, the humiliations which had preceded his departure. Isabel remained with Mr. and Mrs. Russell, a cherished and beloved inmate, her health restored, and her beauty more brilliant than ever, until claimed as a bride by one who had long loved her. Dr. Crawford had settled near them, and was also a frequent and welcome visitor.

"Look at Theresa," said Julie; "her only pleasure appears to consist in sitting in the open air, when the weather will permit her to do so. It makes me sad to look on her vacant countenance."

"Yes," replied Russell, "she has been thus ever since the day of my mother's death. That event appeared to destroy the little intellect she then possessed. She is far happier in her present state of harmless idiotcy, than if still retaining sufficient reason to remember the sorrows which have destroyed her mind."

As Russell spoke, an aged black, mounted on a gray pony, came over the lawn. He alighted, and descended the steps, holding several letters in his hand.

"I has been to de city, Sir, to require for de letters, hopin' dat you has some news from my master dat was," said the negro, removing his hat from his grizzled head.

"You are gratified, Corporal. Here is a letter from Madame Zavala."

As he glanced his eye over it, the alteration in his countenance did not escape the eye that was fixed eagerly on him.

"What is it, Sir—for God's sake, what has happened?"

"There is ill news, old man. Your old mistress tells me that her son is dead."

A shriek burst from the lips of the black, and he stood several moments with his hands clasped, tears coursing each other over his wrinkled cheeks.

"God's will be done," he at length said; "though 'tis hard to give up de child one has carried in his arms, and seen grow to be a man.

"Be comforted, Corporal, when you remember how lost he was to all who loved or honoured him. By his death you gain your freedom."

"Freedom! what cares I for freedom? Oh, Massa Charles, was not my life bound up with de honour o' de family, and now it is all gone for ever. I don't want freedom; let me die as I was born. You will not cast me off now, in my old age, to be a burden to de country?"

"No, old man, never! with me you may remain to the last hour of your life, if you will it so."

After the death of Inez, Madame Zavala had retired into a convent in New Orleans with the intention of devoting the remainder of her days to Heaven. Her son, on the marriage of Julie to his rival, returned home, and took the management of his property in his own hands. The claims of his gambling associates and his own carelessness in business soon reduced him to the necessity of sacrificing his estate for much less than its real value. The slaves, with the exception of Corporal Black, were sold with the land; the old man was permitted to choose his own master, and was purchased for the term of Zavala's life. He had chosen Col. Alwin.

Zavala then established himself in New Orleans, but neither his respect nor his affection for his mother could draw him from the fatal fascination which enslaved him. He played with indifferent success, until a sudden run of ill luck impoverished him. In a moment of madness and excitement, from excessive drinking, he cheated, was discovered, and destroyed himself.

"Ah, here is a letter from Isabel, and another with a ship-mark!" exclaimed Julie. "It is—it is from my father!"

The seals were quickly broken, and the contents read. De Bourg and Col. Alwin were both in New York, and the former might be expected almost immediately. This was the second trip he had made to Europe since the marriage of his daughter. During the whole of that time Col. Alwin had been a wanderer in other lands.

Isabel's letter informed them that she had heard of her father's arrival, and was about to embark at a southern port for New York, where he wished her to meet him.

CONCLUSION.

Oh pity, God, this miserable age!

SHAKSPEARE.

MANY—many years after the foregoing scenes were enacted, an aged and solitary man sat alone in his chamber. A volume of Shakspeare lay open on the table before him. The page was unclosed at Henry VIII., and he was reading the dialogue between Wolsey and Cromwell. He raised his eyes from the book, and they fell on

a full length portrait which hung immediately before him. It was the picture of a girl in the first dawn of womanhood, and the face was a lovely one to look on.

"Such, too, was my fate," he muttered; "yet I could have better borne it, had *she* been spared to me, or was her loss involved in less uncertainty. Oh, my daughter, thine was a wayward destiny!"

A knock on the door was heard, and a servant ushered in a stranger. He was a dark, weather-beaten man, in the costume of a sailor.

"What is your business with me?" inquired the old man.

The stranger pulled a worn and soiled newspaper from his pocket, and pointed to an advertisement which had been published many years before. He then said:

"You here offer a large reward for any news of your daughter's fate."

"Yes," said Alwin, eagerly, "I will give you more than that—anything—everything to gain information respecting her!"

"I can give it," was the laconic reply, "but I doubt whether it will be acceptable."

"Let me hear it at once," replied the father with firmness.

"The vessel in which she sailed was not wrecked. It was taken by pirates, plundered, scuttled, and sunk with the passengers fastened in the cabin."

"Fiend! demon! wretch!" said the agonized old man, "I will not believe you—'tis false—false!"

"Here is the proof," said the sailor, offering a written paper to him. "This is the confession of one of the pirate crew when on his death-bed. This ring he took from the finger of the only lady passenger. If she was your daughter, you will recognise it."

As he spoke, he drew forth a ring set with diamonds.

Alwin took it with a trembling hand, and glancing at the initials on the inside, he fell senseless on the floor.

That ring had been his parting gift to his daughter!

THE END.

LONDON:
C. WHITING, BEAUFORT-HOUSE, DUKE-STREET, LINCOLN'S-INN-FIELDS.

Stirling, June 1893.

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS'

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ALCOTT, Louisa M.—

See "RUBY SERIES," *page* 23.

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